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TÍTULO DEL TRABAJO DE FIN DE MÁSTER

Perduta Gente (1989), de Peter Reading (1946-2011), como docu-poema: estudio y potencial enriquecimiento en términos musicales. / *Perduta Gente* (1989), by Peter Reading (1946-2011), as Docu-poem: Overview and Potential Enrichment in Musical Terms

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* In order to deal with bibliographical references in this End-of-Degree Project, the
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SUMMARY

This End-of-Degree Project, based on research into a wide range of bibliographical sources, provides an analytical overview of the collage-based long poem by the British writer, Peter Reading (1946-2011), entitled *Perduta Gente* (1989). This analysis also explains why Reading's composition may also be categorized as a docu-poem, given how it projects a synthesis of visually graphic material, on the one hand, and stanza-based poems, on the other, while the whole constitutes a disturbing, Dantesque vision of one of the marginalized sectors (who Orwell called "down and outs") of British society at a time, the final fifth of the twentieth century, of extreme affluence being enjoyed by the so-called yuppie society.

Prior to the stylistic analysis of the poem itself, attention is paid to the professional figure of Peter Reading in biographical and artistic terms with the aim of underlining how, as a socially-aware writer, with a social conscience, he is clearly capable of facing the artistic challenge that involves creativity as it develops on the interface between art and the testimony to the existence of human degradation.

In terms of the Project's structure, the initial categorization of it and its author is followed by a second, central phase, which provides an analysis of the poem's style, beginning with how Dante's "Inferno" section of the *Divine Comedy* functions as an intertextual trigger mechanism within Reading's composition. Thereafter, further sections explore the characteristics of the discourse types that contribute to the composition's overall configuration, the features of the rhythmic component that sustains the sections of *Perduta Gente* in verse, together with the role of lexis and semantics in the impact of this work upon the reader. What is argued is that it is this same linguistic impact that historicizes this work, given that, through the aesthetics of documentary naturalism the role of the city of London is highlighted in the composition. Thus, history and linguistic history become synonymous and, as a result, this disturbing aspect of the history of the city, that of the scenario involving the down and outs, cannot be eliminated from its annals.

Likewise, also in terms of how poetry can be seen to carry a vital social function, the history of the nation is also projected in terms of the need for ethically-based veracity in those sections of the work that are represented graphically as documents related to a serious radioactive leak at a nuclear power station, an incident which is the subject of a government cover-up. At the same time, this synthesis of historically-relevant documentation and poetic art is the way in which the American poet, Susan Howe, may be seen to provide a key professional point of comparison with Peter Reading.

However, given that the objective of this Project is to explore the nature of the phenomenon of the docu-poem, what is paid more attention to is the way in which, potentially, this visually-based work can be enriched further by envisioning it as an audiovisual product. As a professional musician and singer-songwriter, in the third (creative) phase of this Project, its author includes examples of potential musical enrichment (via *YouTube*), of Reading's docu-poem. All of which points to how this tri-dimensional Project has indeed felt the impact of such a memorable long poem, i.e. docu-poem, while attempting to filter that same impact in terms of literary criticism. At the same time, the critical endeavor involved has tried to show how *Perduta Gente* (1989) is still alarmingly relevant at the ending of the first quarter of the new millennium.

"For poetry makes nothing happen…" W.H. Auden, "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" (1939).

1. Preliminary remarks and objectives

In this End-of-Master's Project, what will be analyzed, and enriched, it is hoped, in a preliminary way at least, is what will be called here a docu-poem, a term used to identify a class of literary work that synthesizes verse and graphically projected documentation of different kinds. The work, written by the Merseyside poet, Peter Reading (1946-2011) is entitled *Perduta Gente* (1989), i.e. the docu-poem that will be analyzed here, while an attempt will also be made to enrich this same primary source, as will be explained below. Of the extant editions available in libraries, the one used in this study has been taken from *Collected Poems 2: Poems 1985-1996*, published by Bloodaxe Books in 1996, 159 to 214.[1]

In terms of what has been called above a process of enrichment here, it is how this work can potentially, and readily even, be imagined as an audiovisual docu-poem that will be put forward in this Project, especially if aesthetic products of this same kind such as *V.* (1985)[2] and *Xanadu* (1992),[3] by the poets Tony Harrison (born 1937) and Simon Armitage (born 1963), are taken into account. Moreover, as a professional musician and singer-songwriter, the

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[1] Even though, for aesthetic reasons, certain page numbers with regard to the primary source are omitted, throughout the text of this study, references to pages will be indicated as though numbering were on-going.

[2] "Harrison's most famous poem, and his first foray into television, is *V* (1985), written during the miners' strike of 1984–85, and describing a trip to see his parents' grave in a local cemetery in Leeds, [a precinct which has been desecrated and vandalized by football fans who use it as a short-cut on their way to the Leeds FC matches]." See https://briefpoems.wordpress.com/tag/v/ Accessed 07 Mar 2024.

[3] "Innovative, hard-edged poem-film set on a Rochdale housing estate. First transmitted on *Words on Film*." See https://www.simonarmitage.com/xanadu/ Accessed 07 Mar 2024.

author of this Project has taken the initiative of composing possible examples of musical accompaniment (see section 7) with the aim of actually making more feasible the transformation of Reading's long poem into an audiovisual docu-poem. Likewise, in terms of the factor of music, another adapted long poem that has been taken into account is the musical version of David Jones' *Anathemata* (1952).[4]

In what may be termed a modernist, collage-based format, *Perduta Gente* is a work that brings together poems, images of handwritten notepad material, and newspaper clippings, besides a wider range of visual documentary material, modified by the poet with aesthetic intentions, as would be supposed. Here, then "[p]oetic styles are interspersed with literary citations and/or pastiches" (Roberts 2014, 181), with the aim of what will later be referred to as a disturbing vision of "Junk Britain" (Paulin 1988, 204) [see section 6.2]: a vision of class inequality in contemporary society with a focus, in terms of the tradition of literary naturalism, upon the crude, disturbing reality of the Dantesque lifestyle of marginalized human beings in contemporary London. In this latter sense, the title of Reading's work constitutes a clear allusion to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and in particular to the section known as 'Canto III' within the section entitled "Inferno", in which Virgil and Dante meet at the gates of hell (Türe Abaci 2015, 94). More will be said about Dante as a source text later in this study.

1.1. Objectives

Given what has been stated above, the objectives of this Project may be clarified thus: to provide a stylistic overview of Peter Reading's work entitled *Perduta Gente* (1989) within the creative category called here docu-poem, keeping in mind the hypothetical vision of it as an audiovisual, aesthetic product. In this sense, the hypothetical musical enrichment of extracts taken from the work, and their aesthetic justification, will also be considered an objective of this study. Finally, keeping in mind the historical dimension of the poetic texts that form part of Reading's work, what will also be explored in the analytical sections (4, 5 and 6) of this Project, are the ways in which, stylistically speaking, the nightmare vision of the lives of the down-and-outs that is offered in the poem is as much a part of the history of London (the setting for the work) as the often-called 'glorious' first Elizabethan Age, or the period of the Blitz during the Second World War, and how, consequently, the historical relevance of such a vision cannot be ignored.

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[4] "In 1952 the BBC producer Douglas Cleverdon proposed to the poet David Jones that his epic-length composition, *The Anathemata,* be adapted to music for radio broadcast" (Dilworth 1991).

Finally, with regard to this first section of this Project, in practical terms, while keeping in mind its evolution, what needs to be pointed out is how the frequent use of the term "down-and-out[s]," to refer to the outcast, marginalized protagonists of *Perduta Gente*, has been sourced from George Orwell's collection of autobiographical essays, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933). Likewise, although Orwell's description of the underbelly of Paris also revolves around poverty and exclusion, given the quasi-bohemian milieu alluded to in his prose, the style employed comes nowhere near the (often) scatological naturalism employed in Reading's work: "The Paris slums are a gathering-place for eccentric people—people who have fallen into solitary, half-mad grooves of life and given up trying to be normal or decent. Poverty frees them from ordinary standards of behaviour, just as money frees people from work" (Orwell 2012, 4). Meanwhile, it is the *OED* definition of a person who is described as a down-and-out, dated 1906, would seem to acquire a greater degree of relevance here: "Of a person: completely without resources or means of livelihood; reduced to destitution or vagrancy. Also of places, circumstances, etc.: characteristic of an impoverished or vagrant existence; exhibiting a deterioration into squalor."[5]

2. The figure of Peter Reading

2.1. Life and work

To ensure a more complete vision of the poetic documentary work *Perduta Gente*, it is necessary to dedicate space to the study of the figure of its author. Peter Reading was an English poet, born in Liverpool in 1946, and who died in November 2011 (Dee 2011). He is considered by many to be one of Britain's most innovative poets writing in the second half of the twentieth century (Klawitter 2008, 187; Potts 2010, 1). The Irish poet Tom Paulin says of him that he was "the unofficial laureate of a decaying nation" (1988, 204) and affirms that one of his main achievements was the "amazing and unflinching discovery of a subject few English poets have been able to confront: Junk Britain" (Paulin 1988, 204).

Reading's formal education in painting in the 1960s took place at Liverpool College of Art, and, according to the interview he gave to Robert Potts in 1990, it was also those years that marked the beginning of his poetic career (2010, 1). His education in visual arts is not a trivial matter since it would come to indelibly mark his style as a writer. In that sense, what becomes

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[5] *OED*, s.v. "down and out (*adv., n., & adj.*)," September 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9046791092.

noteworthy is how at that time artists such as Jim Dine[6], Jasper Johns,[7] and Robert Rauschenberg[8] had already established themselves professionally, while their eclectic style, also called "magpie style," in the form of the use of found materials, is that which Reading would end up incorporating into his poetic arsenal (O'Driscoll 1994, 200). In this sense, it can be argued that "his poetry is as much a visual spectacle as an arrangement of words" (Day 1998, 83), and can be compared to a kind of "Post Synthetic Cubist work," in terms of its use of a range of superimposed materials that somehow manage to "disorientate the reader" (83).

Although not dedicated to a comparative study of the figure of Reading and other artists who can be considered his contemporaries, but rather to the exploration of the phenomenon of the docu-poem, the identification of the author of *Perduta Gente* with the highly eclectic American poet, Susan Howe (1937), in comparative terms, is something that should not be passed over, especially since, as will be explored in the analytical phase of this Project, both poets embed their art within the discourse of history, both in graphic and in linguistic terms.

From that same visual-linguistic perspective, after a brief period dedicating himself to the arts as a professor at the same Liverpool College of Art (a profession that he would later abandon to try, unsuccessfully, to write poetry full time), he channels his energy toward the search for a permanent job, which he will find in a Shropshire feed mill company (Türe Abaci 2019, 94). The following has also been stated about how Reading "chose to stay away from the 'ivory tower' poetry scene[, while] working-class employment was a more-than-twenty-year survival strategy, and an act of self-exile from academic and literary circles, although poetry remained a life-long interest for [him]" (2019, 94). Later Reading would begin to appeal to a larger audience and "started to feel more secure financially with the support of the Lannan Foundation" (Türe Abaci 2019, 94), so that, despite a continuing, although less dramatic, degree

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[6] "Jim Dine (born June 16, 1935) is an American artist. Dine's work includes painting, drawing, printmaking (in many forms including lithographs, etchings, gravure, intaglio, woodcuts, letterpress and linocuts), sculpture and photography; his early works encompassed assemblage and happenings, while in recent years his poetry output, both in publications and readings, has increased." See https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/jim-dine-1009 Accessed 15 Mar 2024.

[7] "Jasper Johns, (born May 15, 1930) is an American painter, sculptor, draftsman, and printmaker. Considered a central figure in the development of American postwar art, he has been variously associated with abstract expressionism, Neo-Dada, and pop art movements." See https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/jasper-johns-1365 Accessed 15 Mar 2024.

[8] "Milton Ernest "Robert" Rauschenberg (October 22, 1925 – May 12, 2008) was an American painter and graphic artist whose early works anticipated the Pop art movement. Rauschenberg became well-known for his Combines (1954–1964), a group of artworks which incorporated everyday objects into his medium of art materials, thereby blurr[ing] the distinctions between painting and sculpture." See https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/robert-rauschenberg-1815 Accessed 15 Mar 2024.

of financial insecurity, as far as poetry is concerned, Reading ended up publishing a collection of poetry annually, with a total of twenty-six books published up until his death (95).

As far as his creative work is concerned, Klawitter maintains that "[it shows] him to be an outspoken critic of the downside of contemporary Western civilization" (2008, 187). In this sense, Reading seems to stand out for his deep commitment to the representation of reality. In Day's words, his work involves an aesthetic approach that involves "[the need] to return to the real" (1998, 87), and which, in turn, rejects "the [sense of] transcendence [associated with] poetry," and which "inevitably involves a new perception of the real" (87). Along the same lines, this same academic critic states that "the central tension of Reading's verse consists of a desire to describe things as they are and a desire to find connections with them [and] transfigure them" (92).

Roberts expresses the same thought, for whom there is no doubt that "part of Reading's motivation is to confront his readers with the ugliness of the world they live in" (2007, 216). In this approach to the representation of reality, Reading uses a compendium of elements that include, as will be analyzed later in greater depth in this Project, its use of obscene language, vulgarisms, scatological expressions, and colloquialisms, together with expressions typical of the slang of the time, in this case, the 1980s. These characteristics of the lexical-semantic content of his work generate adhesion to an impactful discursive context that positions his work in a specific time and space, i.e. it ensures the historicizing of his work, as will be suggested more clearly later in this Project. In other words, "[his] poetry always [finds itself] enmeshed in circumstance, time, place and society" (Corcoran 1993, 247).

Based on this same study of Reading by Neil Corcoran, parallel to this, it is necessary to emphasize the deep knowledge that Peter Reading had of classical poetic forms, in what Rácz would define as a virtuosity that allowed him "to write practically in any traditional meter and structure from the Petrarchan sonnet through Greek distichs" (2004, 10). This, together with the Liverpool poet's extraordinary ability to absorb into his creations a wide range of elements, from typographic resources, visual layouts and structures, fonts and images, to metrical diversity, together with what Day calls "a promiscuous blending of poetry and prose" (83) makes of Reading a "challenging" poet (Klawitter, 187) for the reader, who "has to work hard" (Day, 92) in order to ensure a clear vision of the work being dealt with. However, in Day's words, this effort "has its reward; the exertion extends capacity and effects a small transformation showing that poetry too participates in the universal violence Reading insists we confront" (1998, 92). For all the above it is possible to align him with the already-mentioned American poet, Susan Howe.

With further regard to the matter of the main characteristics of Reading's style, what becomes relevant is the intertextual and intra-textual character of his works. Türe Abaci underlines the way in which his style is "self-referential, and the strategies he uses foreground the materiality of language, all the while questioning the authenticity of the poetic material available to the poet" (2015, 94). For his part, Schlutz states that "one of the most striking aspects of Reading's work is the compositional unity of his books of poetry and the increasingly dense intra-textual connections between them" (2018, 787). This may be because, as Martin points out in the prologue to the poetry collection entitled *Vendange Tardive*, from the beginning of Reading's career, he tends to conceive of his books "as mosaics, as elaborations on a complex theme with many variations," and therefore "plan[s] his work more in accordance with the architectural schemes and relatively fixed subject-matter of novelists" (Reading 2010, 22–23; Schlutz, 787).

In this same line of thought, i.e. with regard to the novelistic approach to creativity in his works, Corcoran underlines the way in which Reading's perspective is based on "sequences which sew a thread of narrative or plot around a single central preoccupation […] But these single themes are filtered through multiple narrators" (1993, 254). As will be analyzed later in this study, these narrators range from one end of the linguistic and cultural spectrum to the other, with voices "speaking a babble of different accents and dialects, writing a plurality of Englishes ranging from upper-class formality to lower-class demotic and solecism" (Corcoran, 254). Again, as will also be pointed out, an effort is required on the part of the reader so as to ensure as clear an exercise of discernment as possible [regarding] the different elements at work in each creative piece. It is of no surprise, therefore, that Reading's style may be termed fragmentary, given that his poems "self-consciously spill back over into the world and the texts from which they derive and to which they address themselves" (Corcoran, 247).

As mentioned above, Reading's work requires effort on the part of the reader, an effort invested in structuring and the discernment of stylistic strands in each creative piece. This has earned him followers, but also critical scrutiny by some (Pauls 2013, 79). At the same time, although Reading is "a solitary poet who does not belong to any group" (Rácz 2004, 14), much has been said about the similarities of his work with that of other writers, the already-mentioned alignment with the poetic strategies of Susan Howe being relevant in this sense. In this way, O'Driscoll compares him to Tony Harrison,[9] pointing out that his reputation is "less secure"

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[9] "Tony Harrison is Britain's leading film and theatre poet. He has written for the National Theatre in London, the New York Metropolitan Opera and for the BBC and Channel 4 television. He was born in Leeds, England in

(1994, 200), although he considers him "equally adept" (200) when it comes to turning mundane elements into poetry and giving voice to the marginalized. Furthermore, Rácz, above all, underlines how Reading's "versatility goes well beyond most of what has been published under that rubric" (200). At the same time, this same critic argues that the poet "commands prosodic skills and mordant wit which can more than match Wendy Cope,[10] Gavin Ewart,[11] and John Whitworth[12] at their best" (200).

Within this same line of thought, it is possible to establish a parallel between Reading's style and that of T.S Eliot. According to Day, both authors coincide "in the[ir] choice of subject matter, [the use made of] classical allusion and [in the] mixture of registers [resorted to]" (1998, 81). However, this same critic underlines the difference between both writers in that "Eliot believed that poetry could be a vehicle for the redemption of modernity, [while] Reading gives it no such privileged status. It does not stand apart from other discourses but confronts, embraces, and is contained by them" (81). The poet Tom Paulin claims that "the scrambled literary heritage which Reading draws on [, and which again aligns him with Susan Howe,] is consciously gapped, and this is one of his deconstructive strategies, a mode of irony which subverts T. S. Eliot's idea of tradition" (1988, 207). This same poet-critic goes further and emphasizes how this state of affairs assures that this concept of Eliot's naturalistic tradition is artificial, and that Reading "attempts [to] bulldoz[e] it" (207).

Crawford defines Reading's technique as post-modernist, and points to how its evolution out of modernism "reminds its readers of the need for [crap] as well as Titians" (1989, 2). In some way or other his work acts as a reminder that art, in all its splendor, "depends on a biology that is eroding fast" (2). In this sense, his apocalyptic vision constitutes the result of an amalgam

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1937 and was educated at Leeds Grammar School and Leeds University, where he read Classics and took a diploma in Linguistics." See https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/tony-harrison Accessed 18 Mar 2024

[10] "Poet Wendy Cope was born in Erith, Kent in 1945 and read History at St Hilda's College, Oxford. Cope's poetry is perhaps best known for its humour and wit." See https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/wendy-cope Accessed 18 Mar 2024

[11] "Poet Gavin Ewart was born in London in 1916, of Scottish descent. He was educated at Wellington College, Berkshire, and Christ's College, Cambridge […] His delivery is concise and witty, although the humour of his everyday subject matter is undercut by the melodious, at times almost mournful, cadence of his speech." See https://poetryarchive.org/poet/gavin-ewart/ Accessed 18 Mar 2024

[12] "John Whitworth (1945-2019) was an English poet who was born in India. He began writing as an undergraduate at Oxford, and published nine collections […] A committed formalist, his work holds many of the delights of a type of Light Verse made most famous by the New Yorker in the mid-20th Century: the accessibility of subject (often the minutiae of the everyday), the heavy rhymes, the dark and sinister themes that lurk beneath the jovial tone." See https://poetryarchive.org/poet/john-whitworth/ Accessed 18 Mar 2024

between Dante's work and the pages of *The Sun*[13] (2). The following observation by Crawford also acquires relevance: "[R]eviewers sometimes see Reading as a kind of social worker … who reveals the underside of our dole-full, opulent society" (1). Furthermore, this same critic considers him a "bard of a society in cancerous decline" (1).

In the specific case of the reception of *Perduta Gente*, in a review of *Ukelele Music* and *Perduta Gente* published in *Publishers Weekly*, the following is stated: "[H]is obsession with the gross has led British reviewers to call Reading's humor 'too black'". (1994, 45) The work is "merely" the equivalent of "collage," while noting that "(t)he technique is less effective than Reading's amalgam elsewhere of parody and political commentary" (45). In another review, published in the *New Statestman & Society*, the work is defined as "a bag of windfalls, rotten and stinking" (Lucas 1989, 34). Lucas seems to be right, however, in mentioning as key points the post-Chernobyl setting of the work, as well as its London dimension, and he jokes in a certain way that *Perduta Gente* would be the argument that the devil would use to not let the extreme right-wing Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, enter hell, revealing thus the political-social dimension of th[is long poem] (34).

3. Historical context

As mentioned previously, *Perduta Gente* was first published in 1989, at the end of a decade known for how the United Kingdom was affected politically by the measures adopted by the ultra-conservative Prime Minister of the time, Margaret Thatcher.[14] Thatcher was at the forefront of the country and the conservative party from 1979, when she succeeded Tony Blair, until 1990 (Reitan 2003, vii). Like her American counterpart, Ronald Reagan, she encountered a global economic crisis with profound local effects at the beginning of her mandate. Within this scenario, her policies were characterized, in terms of the country's economy, by strategies of neo-liberalism through privatization (Davis 2019, 23), and likewise by "the strengthening of financial and transnational capital, and the dialectic of authoritarian populism and statism" (Jessop 2015, 16).

Commentators on economic subject-matter have indicated that the Prime Minister held traditionalist values and advocated recovering the lost stability associated with Victorian values, as Samuel has indicated: "Thatcher's traditionalism was perhaps more a matter of style than of

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[13] *The Sun* mentioned here is the British tabloid newspaper founded by George Augustus Henry Sala in 1964 and bought by Rupert Murdoch in 1969.

[14] The author of this End-of-Degree Project wishes to state that any observation of a political nature included in this same text should never be interpreted as an expression of personal political convictions.

substance. If in one voice she regretted lost stability, in another she seized on what was new and developing" (1992, 9).

Hers was a government that gave rise to a deep schism within public opinion. On the one hand, her measures meant that Great Britain became "an integral part of the emerging world economy" (Reitan 2003, 32), but, at the same time, during her mandate there were "more job losses than at any other time in twentieth-century British history" (Samuel 1992, 29). The latter factor, which undoubtedly contributed to an alarming increase in social inequality, is what is portrayed in works such as *Perduta Gente*, which reflects the existence, on the one hand, of down-and-outs surviving somehow in abject misery, having to keep warm by wrapping their bodies in used newspaper to be able to resist the cold nights, and on the other, the lucky ones who can afford to buy ultra-expensive London properties and attend concerts at the Royal Festival Hall.

The latter, emerging during the eighties in the United States and Europe, will be baptized with the term 'yuppies,'[15] who, in most basic terms, were definable as "members of the baby boom generation with college educations and high-paying jobs" (Hammond 1986, 487). Moreover, this same socioeconomic group became distinguishable, regardless of their age and job, by "a life-style devoted to personal careers and individualistic consumption" (Smith 1987, 151). It can be argued that one of the consequences of the emergence of this group was a more pronounced evolution of the phenomenon known as gentrification, which is also manifested in *Perduta Gente*. In this case, the homeless down-and-outs, around which Reading's work revolves, are evicted from the site they occupy, which is going to be remodeled and put up for sale. Even so, in the words of Rose, "a multiplicity of processes […] produces profound changes in the occupation of inner-city neighborhoods from lower to higher income residents" (1984, 62), while this disadvantaged group fall to being victims rather than agents within a society based on aggressive capitalism.

In terms of the history of the 1980s in Europe, while occurring in the same year as the publication of Reading's work, it is necessary to mention here the Fall of the Berlin Wall, which occurred on November 9, 1989 and which marked what is known as the end of communism in the continent (Engel 2009, 1). Historians then and now confirm that, during the second half of the twentieth century, the international political panorama had been marked by the Cold War, in existence since the end of the Second World War, which, although not giving rise to direct

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[15] "A jocular term for a member of a socio-economic group comprising young professional people working in cities." *OED*, s.v. "yuppie (*n.*)," March 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5528905904.

East-West military conflicts, did imply pugnacious competition for political and economic influence. One such scenario of competitive tensions, was the nuclear arms race, due to the on-going threat of a nuclear war (Boucher 2019, 1221–25). Likewise, within the context of the Nuclear Age, the United Kingdom was already generating electric power through atomic power stations of the kind that forms part of the narrative framing of *Perduta Gente*.

Keeping this same context in mind, one of the most landmark events of the decade, internationally speaking, was the disaster that occurred in Chernobyl in 1986, marking a before and after in public opinion with regard to dependence on nuclear energy:

> In the early hours of Saturday 26 April 1986, a series of explosions occurred in the Unit 4 reactor of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant near Pripyat, Ukraine, sending radioactive dust high into the atmosphere. That day night winds blew from the south-east, carrying the radioactive plume north and west across Belarus and Lithuania to Sweden, where the alarm was first raised on 28 April […] In the following days, clouds bearing the isotopes iodine-131, caesium-137 and strontium-90 dispersed widely across western Europe, and subsequently the globe. Some of these clouds passed over Britain on 2 and 3 May, raining radioactive particles down on areas of North Wales, Cumbria and Scotland. (Alexander and Harris 2022, 3)

As was to be expected, these events had their echo in literature, although this Project is not the place to confirm or deny what Alexander and Harris call the flowering of "a larger body of 'nuclear literature' [during the eighties and nineties]" (2022, 87), in which a large number of poets emerged who "combined their creative practice with antinuclear activism in a political conjuncture where nationalist, pacifist and environmentalist movements converged" (Alexander and Harris 2022, 87).

Although while not including *Perduta Gente* directly within this 'literary category,' the socio-historic context of those years might well have influenced the 'nuclear' nature of the work's plot, which centers around a radioactive leak from a nuclear power station, an event which has been covered up by the authorities. In addition, Reading will make use of the images of a multitude of documents related to nuclear power plants and the harmful effects upon people's health due to contact with this type of materials (Alexander and Harris 2022, 3).

4. Voice, docu-poem, discourse types

4.1. Voice

The varied strands of discourse (both visual/graphic and linguistic) that contribute to the configuration of the overall text that makes up this creative work entitled *Perduta Gente* may be said to be presented, or projected, in an on-going way, between the opening and the closing

of this same work. It is also logical to assume that all the discursive strands issue from the same poetic voice (called '*voice-over*' below), while it would seem possible to maintain a hypothesis that puts forward, potentially, or embryonically, at least, that the work as a whole may be appreciated, or conceived of, as a script/screenplay/storyboard for an audiovisual documentary production.[16] As already mentioned, it is for this reason that the original, newly-composed musical input, created by the author of this End-of-Degree Project, to be detailed below, needs to be understood as a hypothetical way of enriching this equally potential audiovisual docu-poem. Likewise, it is in this same sense, that the voice of the overall text would function as a *voice-over*.

Furthermore, as indicated in section 2 above, and with reference to the figure of Peter Reading, the real author's historical and cultural concerns constitute the basis, the *raison d'être*, of this work/docu-poem. Thus, in a fundamental way, the work acquires a historical relevance: "[V]oice variously defined is a lens for understanding reading and writing as processes, whether from developmental, cultural, or social perspectives" (Sperling and Appleman 2011, 71). As will be explained in more detail below, the terms "tone" and "ethos," which appear in the following quotation, can even lead the reader to the conclusion, theoretically, experientially, phenomenologically, therefore, that the aforementioned *voice-over* discernible in its different manifestations throughout *Perduta Gente* projects itself as the voice of its Age (the final phase of the twentieth century):

> In English the term "voice" enters rhetorical theory circuitously. Its primary reference to vocal sound as the vehicle of human utterance dates to at least the fourteenth century. Modern rhetoricians, however, use the term in a highly metonymic sense that attributes the quality or tone of a speaking voice to the character or ethos of its individual speaker. (Kennedy 1987, 216)

And here may be added the words "[…together with the ethos of its Age]".

Kennedy's comments below also provide a theoretical framework for understanding further the interrelated facets of voice, in the form of discourse types, that constitute the structure of Reading's long [docu]-poem:

> Narrative (apaggellonta), on the other hand allows several options: to speak in one's own voice, or in an assumed fictive voice or mixture of voices that imitate the speech of various characters. The second of these options—to speak in an assumed fictive

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[16] The following examples of such a format may be cited: Simon Armitage's *Xanadu* (1992); Tony Harrison's *V* (1985), *Black Daisies for the Bride* (1993), and *The Gaze of the Gorgon* (1992); Jackie Kay's *Twice Through the Hearth* (1991), etc.

voice—subtly modifies the notion of genres other than drama or narrative. For the lyric it allows the poetic speaker to relinquish his or her own voice altogether and to speak in an imaginative, fictively dramatized voice not his or her own (1987, 218).

Yet, this Project wishes to argue, it is this voice that hovers throughout the poem and which may be conceived of as the voice of history.

4.2. Docu-poem

Criticism has recognized the genre of docu-poem as a valid contribution to cultural and literary history:

> [T]he literary genre of poetry is in itself, abundant with different sub-genres that arise according to different phases with their different motivations that are reflected in the poets' literary creations of this or that phase. One of the modern sub-genres of poetry is documentary poetry or docupoetry. At the onset, documentary poetry is a kind of poetry that includes basic material such as political, terrorism, and poetry-related events. This gives an idea about the main goal behind docupoetry, which is to relate human voices or human experiences through the medium of poetry. However, these human experiences are not merely expressed through the poet's perspective or his emotional status. It is rather conveyed through real documented [material,] voices or experiences within a poetic frame. (Wazzan 2023, 1429)

The following has also been stated in basic terms: "In other words documentary poetry can only achieve its intended effect through combining the document with the artistic talent of the poet. In other words, the intended effect cannot be achieved by employing the document only or through verse only" (Wazzan 2023, 1430).

In this same sense, the collage-based, fragmented nature of Reading's potential docu-poem itself has been written about: "*Perduta Gente* imitates the physical appearance of fragmented texts. The book is like the skeleton of a pseudodocumentary novel: [T]he reader sees the documents that can become the *corpus delicti* for both sides at a future trial" (Rácz 2004, 13).

4.3. The visual as discourse

The following also constitutes a useful, basic statement in this regard: "Documentary discourse asks us to reconsider the ways in which poetry is also visual. Poetry uses the space of the page itself to call attention to language" (Magi 2014, 274) If Reading's work is taken into

consideration, then, its audiovisual potential enhances much further any basic idea of the visual-graphic feature of, for example, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poetry.[17]

In discursive terms, what is most surprising about the visual presentation of content in poetry is how literary criticism considers the very physical and graphic layout of poetry on a page as being, in part, a visual phenomenon:

> As well as the usual formal considerations of stanza, line, syntax and sound, the poem uses the page as a site for the visual construction of the poem out of the material of language, combining the effect of the arrangement of the material on the page with the referential qualities of the words and their syntactical relationships. The arrangement of lines, shifting left-hand margins and the use of white space all affect the rhythmic aspects of the language, the pace of reading, and the way attention is given to particular words. (Davidson 2007, 129)

Keeping such considerations in mind, in the case of *Perduta Gente*, implies conceiving of the pages in which stanza-based compositions appear as zones which, meta-poetically speaking, highlight the survival of the aesthetics of poetic art within an extremely hostile and startling contemporary reality. The presence of stanzas, together with the varied indentation of lines within them quite often even project the impression of the hymn format as found in hymnals, for example. Thus, such configurations may even have the function of being comfort zones of civilization, even though their reading content generates a sense of alarm and pessimism as regards the state in which civilization finds itself.

This same factor of the visual impact of what is poem-as-format is made even more patently relevant by Cobbing and Upton in the following terms:

> Since most written or printed poetry already has a visual element, it is probably wrong to regard visual or concrete poetry as a totally new departure. A page of *The Faerie Queene* looks different from a page of *Paradise Lost*, to say nothing of a page of *The Waste Land*. These things hit the eye right away and affect our reading of the work concerned. What 'visual poetry' does is foreground and specialise and extend and sharpen something which has always been there (1999).

As has been mentioned previously, quite often in this work by Reading, therefore, it is the subliminal presence of verse forms, i.e. in terms of giving the impression of being visually

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[17] "Taking its name from the magazine edited by Charles Bernstein and Bruce Andrews, (L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E), Language poetry is an avant garde poetry movement that emerged in the late 1960's and early 1970's as a response to mainstream American poetry. It developed from diverse communities of poets in San Francisco and New York … Rather than emphasizing traditional poetic techniques, Language poetry tends to draw the reader's attention to the uses of language in a poem that contribute to the creation of meaning." See https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/language-poetry Accessed 01 Apr 2024.

present, which acquires relevance. In that sense, the poetic stanzas as such not only carry verbal impact, but also visual impact.

In this same sense, what also requires consideration is what Bernstein describes as a kind of discursive right that visual aesthetics has to hold its place in the reader's mind as a natural "enactment" of an historical moment: "[A] visual performance of a poetic work on a page or canvas, as a projection or sculpture, installation or score, […] has the qualities of an enactment, of a staged and realized event in which the material means are an integral feature of the work" (1998, 131).

Bernstein also expresses such naturalness in the following way: "[T]here [is] a visual component to almost every area of modern poetry, though this is not meant to imply that visual poetry dominate[s] any of these fields" (Bernstein 1998, 132–33). In other words, it is in this way that the impact-laden aesthetics of a docu-poem may still be considered as poetry, as verse. In other words, this is how Reading's docu-poem struggles to survive as art in an apocalyptic reality, and not only as a documentary-based phenomenon.

In an even more positive light, what has already been termed the collage-based aesthetic at work in this docu-poem implies the relevance, thereby, of considering aesthetics, including visual aesthetics, as a wide-ranging domain:

> "[T]he visual information of the typographic medium bears evidence of a social and cultural context which thus interpenetrates the poetic text. Traces of newspaper headlines, railway schedules, advertisements, and the like inflect Tzara's poetry with a quality of "found" language, whether produced mimetically or through actual appropriation. The effect of these is that the work is interlinked with a linguistic field, which is visually as well as verbally related to the larger domain of language use (Bernstein 1998, 141)

It is for this reason that *Perduta Gente* can hold its place with, in terms of format and visual impact and weight, such major poetic works as *The Anathemata* (David Jones, 1952), *Artorius* (John Heath-Stubbs, 1970), *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (John Ashbery, 1974), *The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Péguy* (Geoffrey Hill, 1983) *Singularities* (Susan Howe, 1990).

4.4. Discourse types

Moreover, the author of this Project would argue that the dramatized voice that is heard throughout the work may even be said to exist as the enactment of the socio-historic drama of its Age, as the voice of history, as was mentioned above. In this same sense, what are often called "dialects," with regard to the phenomenon of voice identities, are found to act as

contributions to the configured poetic voice in its totality: "Certain places are associated traditionally with certain voices. The poet always conjures with their physical space and in the past these spaces have given rise to dialects that inform and shape the poet's voice" (Norgate 2013, 4). This Project, then, has adapted the concept of "dialect[ ]" so that it may become conceivable as the equivalent of the term 'discourse type,' whether visual-graphic, or linguistic, in character.

Likewise, this same voice as *voice-over* (as the voice of history, of the historical moment) may be said to manifest itself via each of the discursive strands, discourse types, that make up the work / docu-poem as a whole. Given the impact-laden naturalism that characterizes Reading's work, it may be said to correspond to what, in critical terms, has been a definition of discourse as a pro-active phenomenon: "Discourse is in an active relation to reality, that language signifies reality in the sense of constructing meanings for it, rather than that discourse is in a passive relation to reality, with language merely referring to objects which are taken to be given in reality" (Locke 2004, 36). It is in this same proactive sense that the range of discourse types (not only linguistic, but also visual-graphic, as already mentioned) acquires relevance precisely because of their interactive dynamic:

> Discourse analysis is rich and expansive rather than formalized and reductive. Discourse cannot be adequately analyzed with a fixed algorithm for reifying it into a configuration of formal symbols. Instead, the analysis should pursue the relevance of a discourse in any direction and to any degree needed in order to grasp its status within social practices. (Groden and Kreiswirth 1993, 208)

Thus, it is through its eclectic interactive nature, in discursive terms, that Reading's docu-poem becomes impact-laden, thereby acquiring relevance in socio-historic terms: "A 'discourse' is not merely a linguistic unit, but a unit of human action, interaction, communication, and cognition. The habit of identifying the 'discourse' with its recorded (usually written) language trace, though deeply entrenched, must be transcended. (Groden and Kreiswirth 1993, 208)

4.4.1. Reporter's notepad

The most obviously identifiable of these discourse types is the one which makes itself discernible via the visually graphic images of the pages torn from what, before the audiovisual and technological innovations in journalistic reporting, would have been a reporter's lined notepad, filled with handwriting, with a wire spiral from which the pages hung, attached to the spiral by a perforated edge, thus making their separation from it an easy task.

On page 169, consisting of the first reporter's notepad image in the work, the reference to the inclusive first-person plural pronoun acquires relevance: "In the crypt of St. Botolph's we got a mug of tea and some bits of bread" (169). Meanwhile the notepad entry on page 172 contains the recounting of shared nauseating negative experiences involving the journalist-speaker (poetic voice / journalistic *voice-over*) together with his fellow down-and-outs in their struggle for survival, as well as within their addictions: "…who, like me, is no stranger to the pig-pen o'nights, told me how he went to the Spike last night…" Here both the place where addicts gather to inject themselves with drugs and the slang word for hypodermic needle are contained within the term "[s]pike". The word itself confirms how the investigative journalist-speaker shares the slang of the social group of the down and outs as a member who, given the already-mentioned phenomenon of 'Stockholm syndrome',[18] as well as his professional command of language, became absorbed into the group, having led a totally different lifestyle previously.

The implication of the factor of inclusiveness, in semantic and grammatical terms, also emerges a little later, where, in contrast to the use of "we," as indicated earlier, it is the pronoun "you" that stands out: "He did a Skipper last night on the kitchen window-ledge of the Royal Hotel – you get a bit of warmth through the glass - …" Here also commonly shared slang is identifiable with the term "Skipper": an example of a lexical blend based on the transformed manifestation of the Irish word "cip," meaning both 'sleep', as well as poor quality housing, into 'kip,' while 'skip' emerges as the iron bin used to throw away unusable materials on building sites. Likewise, "[s]kipper" also refers to the kind of place outcast people habitually use to spend the night. Relevant also in semantic terms, in this case, is the depreciated value, ironically implied, acquired by the term "[s]kipper," habitually a slang term for a ship's captain (derived from the Dutch word for ship ['schip']).[19]

Likewise, the shared negative habits – in this case the consumption of alcohol at the earliest opportunity - acquired by the speaker, are confirmed in the note corresponding to the final diary entry on this same page: "The same bloke I was on about yesterday got given a quid, so we got this tin of Carlsberg Sp[ecial]…" (172).

On page 174 the concept of inclusiveness manifests itself in a doubly ironic way since the sense of aloofness expressed in the erudite language employed functions in a self-ironizing

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[18] "Stockholm syndrome, psychological response wherein a captive begins to identify closely with his or her captors, as well as with their agenda and demands." See: https://www.britannica.com/science/Stockholm-syndrome Accessed 20 May 2024.

[19] *OED*, s.v. "skipper (*n.2*)," September 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7438319271.

way, thus implying the total loss of self-respect even on the part of the investigative journalist / fellow down and out, due to the effect of the Stockholm syndrome: "…and have not been infrequently covered in the crusted slurry of the base beasts with whom I had shared a night's accommodation."

4.4.2. Newspapers and professional publications

A second recognizable visual strand in Reading's work consists of the torn, often fragmentary, extracts from the printed press that appear in this docu-poem: newspapers and magazines, in the form of reports, including headlines of different font size, or publicity material, including classified ads, in the form of estate-agent advertisements. In the case of the latter, the function of such collage-based visual-linguistic material is to bring to the fore the alarmingly huge difference between the elite upper echelons of society (the Yuppie culture) in terms of their spending power, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the down and outs who no longer seem to form part of society even and whose habitat consists of what may be called the underbelly of the metropolis: city zones in ruins and slum areas, buildings taken over by squatters, unfrequented, unhealthy alleyways, together with abandoned riverside paths.

Moreover, the material vehicle for this visually graphic content, as an integral part of the collage-based style of the work as a whole, are the pages of commercially printed material which, in large quantities act as thermal protection in below-zero winters for the down-and-outs, addicts, and alcoholics whose reality is explored and exposed throughout the text as a whole (as on pages 163, 193 and 197).

4.4.3. Letters to the editor

Those same newspapers which function as blankets and wrap-arounds are also found to contain discourse typical of the Letters-to-the-Editor section of traditional paper-printed newspapers (also maintained terminologically in digital editions), as exemplified on page 166, the emphasis being placed on the voices of individuals not characterized precisely by a spirit of solidarity: "They should stop the dole money or cut it in half. That would stop them… That remedy is to cut off his right leg and his left arm…. After all, to give a prisoner a life sentence, he could be out in 16 years."

4.4.4. Nuclear-related documents

A fourth discursive strand which also involves the interaction of graphically-visual, as well as linguistic, content, is projected on the pages that, again through the technique of collage, which inevitably involves the aesthetics of fragmentation, contain extracts from medical-

scientific documents that describe the effects of exposure to radiation. Likewise, such document content also provides preventative advice and instructions concerning the steps to be taken in scenarios involving contamination associated with radiation leaks in nuclear power plants.

4.4.5. Gurgle language

A fifth discourse strand identifiable in the docu-poem being analyzed here involves a poetic form communicated presumably by an intoxicated or inebriated person who is not capable of producing comprehensible speech patterns. In this case, an allusion to Dante could be clearly established by comparing with the discourse present on pages 165, 174, and 184 to the description that the author of the *Divine Comedy* provides on page 79 of the edition of 'Inferno' already cited: "This hymn they gurgle in their throats, for they cannot speak it in full words" (79), and which is again quoted by Reading: "[T]his hymn they gurgle, / being unable to speak" (163). It could be stated that this "gurgle" is represented in the docu-poem through this discursive strand which is characterized in terms of: a) typographical errors and mismatching words, and b) a profound testimonial content based on first person experiences, almost as if it were part of an interview format.

Moreover, to achieve a full understanding of the pages comprising this gurgle-based discursive strand, a transcription is provided here:

> My wife and I busking in the warmth of the Euston underground with a really fucking busted harmonica, playing the one thing (we knew) over and over again.
> My Mrs had gone / went arse-over-head on the fucking down escalator trying to lash out at some cunt or other in a bowler (hat) who gave her two p (pence).
> She got her face and her arm bashed in, caught her sleeve on the place where it goes clackety -clack and says "press emergency stop button".
> Masses of blood like ketchup; the coppers dragging her screaming, still with her good arm out of her pocket holding a bottle of Strongbow (cider).
> At least have given her fifty (pence) or twenty, for fuck's sake. Mister, I'm telling you.
> Can you see this newspaper? It's the only bed we have got at night. (165)

> Have given her a quid or fifty (pence), for fuck's sake. Mister, I'm telling you, telling you: why not have fucking well amputated her arm after it getting knackered up.
> As (Given that) her arm got fucked up in the Euston underground after her falling down ass-over-head on the thing which puffed sound and went clickety-clack.
> My Mrs going to hospital (from) the what's-it-name station.
> Already in the station her arm was squashed. They cut off her squashed arm. Now it's / she's a bag with one arm. The hospital calls it an amputation. (174)

Of course he was always the black sheep of the family, he was,
went to a university too
(did Maths and Physics there)
had a good job he did, too, with the Atomic Energy (Agency),
then he dropped out on the dole,
got on the booze and those drugs
(coco cocaine or whatever it's called, you know, the white stuff),
now he's a squatter,
lives in a squat with no rent,
he was exposed to a dose of radiation. (184)

Moreover, while recalling the already-mentioned concept of dialect, "gurg[ling]" constitutes the confirmation of the total alienation of the down and outs from society in general the equivalent of damnation in hell in Dante.

5. Structure and its evolution

In general terms, the narrative structure of the work as a whole becomes further enriched through the implications of the presence of the discursive strand in the form of the language of workplace manuals related to health and safety: "Again, from Table II of Lecture No. 6 be $0·521 \times 10^6$ curie-MeV" (189), "After irradiation of the gut in […] following disturbances of general…" (202). In this sense, what seems to be relevant for the interrelated nature of the narrative structure of the work is that one of the technicians of the nuclear power station in which the dangerous leak has occurred seems to have uncovered the scandal. The implication would be that a combination of losing his job and his wife due to this leak has meant him having been catapulted beyond the limits of society into the unhealthy environs of the down and outs: "[B]ut he got the sack for telling the newspapers about some radio-active leak … and he couldn't get work and then his wife died (cancer) so he came to this" (195).

Inclusiveness continues to play a role at certain moments in the unfolding of the multi-discursive narrative that makes up the docu-poem as a totality. In that sense, the expression of solidarity is what is projected on page 195 where a personal tone of camaraderie, a further manifestation of Stockholm syndrome, together with the journalistic skill of notetaking, merge. In the case of the latter, and as a potential conclusion to be reached by both protagonist and reader, it is the art of piecing-together, typical of the investigative mode of discourse that emerges. Thus, the guy with whom the "Bottle Bank cocktail" is "guzzled," as "a mixture of stuff from the empties" which "made [them] sick afterwards," becomes identifiable as the sacked employee-informant from the "atomic power station" who has "leaked" (a term used ironically here) to the media the truth of the "radio-active leak" at "[that same] Power Station".

With regard to the distinctive character, or personality, of the heterodiegetic speaker (the journalist *voice-over*), the use of the determiner "some," with its sense of indefiniteness, and indifference almost, with regard to the noun phrase "some atomic power station [or other]," confirms the split nature of that same personality since the voice of the mentally deranged down and out merges with that of the occasionally lucid professional, still capable of emitting quasi-thoughtful considerations: "I think he was fucking well crackers, but we all [are crackers, aren't we?]" Here the adverb "well['s]" postmodifying function as intensifier points subtly to the speaker's prior membership of the already-mentioned much more upper middle-class, cultured, professional (journalist and writer) social class where the euphemistic expression "damn / darn well" would have been employed instead of "fucking."

Likewise, the speaker's capacity to uphold his self-respect and capacity for initiative-taking is reflected in his pro-active role as victual-gatherer and cook for the group: "When we started to have this stew I'd made out of the rotten vegetables they throw away off the stalls in the market, she threw up…" (205). However, the slip into the other facet of his split personality again becomes evident through the use of the demonstrative "this," weighted once more with a sense of indifference.

As also indicated above, the factor of solidarity with the down and out group / community emerges in the description of collective action which is also included on page 204, and likewise conceivable in terms of journalistic reportage projected through *voice-over*, a type of action involving strategies of defense against "the Bailiffs [who] were coming with the [bull]dozers [to evict them]," in a form of siege.

With regard to the overall configuration of *Perduta Gente*, keeping in mind what has already been the subject of comment regarding the phenomenon of Voice, together with what has been taken into account in the research carried out into the range of the critical remarks concerning Peter Reading's style as a writer, while keeping in mind the comments already made in this Project in terms of the interaction of the work's linguistic-poetic discursive zones, on the one hand, and those of a linguistic-graphic kind, on the other, it is the disparate aesthetics of collage that best seems to define that same overall configuration. What has loosely (inevitably so) been called the narrative evolution of this docu-poem may also be briefly explored here, although absolute clarity in this respect would elude any analysis, especially given what has been stated with regard to the phenomenon of the so-called 'Stockholm syndrome' which implies how, in terms of Voice, the figure of the supposed investigative journalist functions as observer of, as well as participant in, the reality / life of the down-and-out (squatter) group.

Keeping the latter factor in mind, chronologically speaking, it is as if the journalist's adolescence had been marked by Destiny in the sense of how his experience of the route to school taken each morning involved direct contact with a down and out woman, called despisingly "a lone hag gippo" (162) whose "caravan" he and his buddies passed by regularly: "(Filthy she was, matted hair, withered leg, and stank of excreta.)" The documentary style of the verse writing, clearly identifiable with the aesthetics of literary naturalism (to be commented on below in section 6.2), prefigures the scatological poetic style that is constantly foregrounded throughout the work: "After that, each time we'd pass it [the caravan] we'd lob / a rock at the window. / When it was smashed she replaced it with cardboard / one of is lit it - / she hobbled around with a pisspot and doused / the flames with its contents."

On page 167, for the first time, the investigative nature of the journalistic dimension of the *voice-over*'s career is highlighted, the term "snoop[ ]" indirectly and simultaneously recalling the terms 'sleuth' and 'voyeur: "*Gente perduta*, wino-unworthies / knackered-up dipsos, / swilling *rosato*-and meths / we snooped a look in their lairs…".

Meanwhile, the journalistic *voice-over* is clearly identifiable as a figure who also possesses poetic skills, as becomes clear in terms of the opening text's (160) formal presentation, as though functioning as a kind of prologue or as the equivalent of the 'portico' to Dante's "Inferno": "Before me were no things created, but eternal; and eternal I endure. Leave all hope, ye that enter. These words, of colour obscure, saw I written above a gate" (Alighieri, 26). What becomes relevant here in terms of the evolution of the work as a whole is the factor involving the depiction of the nature of the (poetic-documentary) *voice-over* in terms of its / his facet as an observer-commentator, prior to the effects being felt of the Stockholm syndrome, and the nature of the *voice-over*, once that fall into a down-and-out identity has been consummated. Moreover, it is precisely the oscillation between both dimensions that characterizes the *voice-over* at all times.

The latter figure seems to acquire a further layer of complexity, if pages 168, 181, and 182 are taken into consideration, implying that, if the journalistic voice in its double role of observer-participant may be said to be the equivalent of the figure of an implied narrator, narratologically speaking, the voice 'heard' on these latter pages would be conceivable as the equivalent of the implied author. In cinematic terms, it's as if it were the equivalent of a behind-the-scenes, How-They-Made-It documentary that is usually issued near a particular movie's release date. Here it is an off-the-cuff comment by the journalist-protagonist, supposedly spoken to the How-They-Made-It documentary maker in what is, after all, projected as a kind of on-going interview, so it seems: "′If you ask me this planet is fucked; not just me, love, the

whole planet fucked'. This, scribbled as circumstances permitted between the derry (the derelict house), and St. Botolph's crypt where the destitute alcos…" (168).

Meanwhile, in the case of the third page mentioned, it is as if the How-They documentary-maker were the addressee in the case of the self-ironizing investigative journalist's confession of professional trickery in order to ensure the presence (for interviewing and filming) of the down-and-outs, in the form of baiting them with food as though they were animals: "Today I have planted a two-kilo *Schinken* / where they will find it / [hooray for the secular saint]." Likewise, it is the same How-They journalist-director who is revealed as a thorough professional with biographical aims in the case of page 181: "…could have [*sic*] expected the author himself would have plumbed such depths of filth, depravity and degradation. For, indeed by his own account (the MS Diaries, pp.101-113), he was by this time 'no stranger to the pig pen o'nights'; 'not infrequently covered in the crusted slurry of the base beasts with whom [*sic*] he had shared a night's accommodation'." Here, it is the presence of a self-conscious free indirect style that confirms the journalist's deliberate professional stance: the ironic tone attached to the somewhat snobbish use of "accommodation" and the folksy use of "'o'," the biblical-apocalyptic register characterizing the noun phrase "the base beasts," not forgetting the Latinism [*sic*]. Thus, what emerges is the awareness of how the Stockholm syndrome has still not taken effect fully, only partially.

Earlier, on page 170, as also occurs later on page 178, the distancing mechanism attached to an eye-witness-type, discursively objective style, in the case of the first of these pages is uppermost: "Often at dusk in the birch woods / beyond the gates of the city / you see the glimmer of the fires of the hapless / dispossessed losers…" *Voice-over* in conjunction with visual footage suggests itself here, while the sympathetic attitude being expressed is already under the influence of the subliminal presence of the effects of the Stockholm syndrome.

6. Style

6.1. Dante's intertextual presence

If the stylistic factor of intertextuality is taken into account, what becomes clear is that the presence of Dante's "Inferno" in the exploration of the London-based hell of the down-and-outs in Reading's docu-poem is evident. The following Table confirms this undeniably:

PERDUTA GENTE	INFERNO
Now we arrive at the front of the ruin; Here are there moanings, Shrieks, lamentations and dole, (163)	When they arrive before the ruin, there the shrieks, the moanings, and the lamentation (50)

Now lie we sullenly here in the black mire – this hymn they gurgle, being unable to speak (163)	now lie we sullen here in the black mire. This hymn they gurgle in their throats, for they cannot speak it in full words." (79)
Here they blaspheme Divine Power (163)	there they blaspheme the divine power. (50)
Let us descend, though, through urinous subways to (185)	Now let us descend into the blind world here below (36)
Al doloroso ospizio, where the (185)	tu, che vieni al doloroso ospizio (49)
These who have never lived, blind lives so mean they Envy all others, (188)	their blind life is so mean, that they are envious of every other lot (29)
Caitiffs whose deep-wailing plaints, Horrible outcries, hoarse sighs Piercing the starless air, dark-stained, (188)	Here sighs, plaints, and deep wailings resounded through the starless air : it made me weep at first. Strange tongues, horrible outcries, words of pain, tones of anger, voices deep and hoarse (27)
When I remember, Terror still bathes me in sweat – Their thunderous outbreathing of woe (188)	When he had ended, the dusky champaign trembled so violently, that the remembrance of my terror bathes me still with sweat (34)
From the tormented Sad, sigh-troubled breath a- rises around them, crowds that are many and great, children and women and men (188)	And this arose from the sadness, without torment, of the crowds that were many and great, both of children, and of women and men (37)
Let us not speak of them, merely observe and silently pass by. (188)	Let us not speak of them; but look, and pass. (29)

At this moment a brief reminder of the cultural weight carried by Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1472) would seem to be in order: Dante Alighieri [1265-1321]), one of the great works

of Western literature (Baxter 2018, i), and of how it is divided into three *cantiches* ("Inferno", "Purgatorio", and "Paradiso"), while, in turn, each *cantiche* is subdivided into a series of cantos, specifically thirty-three each. In the case of "Inferno," it also includes an introductory canto, making a total of thirty-four poetic pieces (Baxter 2018, iv). Although it could be the result of chance, it would seem plausible to argue that Reading follows the formal outline of "Inferno" in terms of 34 poems. Meanwhile, as already indicated, in terms of a comparison with Dante's poem, a parallel journey through the hell of London's down and outs is undertaken, as already indicated above.

Furthermore, Robey adds that "the main sources from which Dante's metaphors are drawn [are] the Bible and the classics" (1985, 113), which is also true in the case of Reading's work. In this sense, references to the Bible can be found in Dante's "Inferno", as on page 108: "La tua loquela ti fa manifesto". In turn, this is a direct reference to Matthew 26:73: "Loquela tua manifestum te faci", or "Woe to you, depraved spirits", in intertextual terms, a reference to Isaiah 10:1-3 also acquires relevance here: "Woe unto them that decree". Likewise, Reading references this same excerpt on page 185 of *Perduta Gente*.

In that same line of thought, on page 185 of *Perduta Gente*, the first five lines are a reference to *Lamentations* 1:1-2:

PERDUTA GENTE	LAMENTATIONS
How doeth the citie sit solitarie that was full of people? She that was great among nations hath no comforter, all her friends haue dealt treacherously (185).	1 How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! 2 She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies. (*The Bible. Authorized King James Version* 2008, 1:1-2)

Although Dante does not reference these verses in the *Divine Comedy*, it is interesting to point out that he quotes *Lamentations* too in another of his works, *La Vita Nuova* (1294), where he starts a letter to the city of Florence with the phrase "How doth the city sit solitary."[20]

Moreover, on this same page of *Perduta Gente,* the following line is found: "Let us descend, though…" Parallel to this, in Dante's "Inferno" a similar phrase is found each time Dante and Virgil descend further through a circle of hell: "But let us now descend to greater misery" (Alighieri, 77). Both instances are different interpretations of a reference to *Genesis* 11:7: "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language…"

At the end of this same poem on page 185, a further biblical allusion emerges in the last 4 lines, where again and excerpt from the *Bible* is reinterpreted:

PERDUTA GENTE	**ISAIAH 10:3**
What will ye doe with yr wealth	And what will ye do in the day of visitation,
in the day of the storme which shall come	and in the desolation which shall come from
from afarre, when all that remaines	far? to whom will ye flee for help? and
is to crouch with those ye haue oppressed?	where will ye leave your glory?

This warning in *Isaiah* is explored in Canto VII of Dante's "Inferno", where the avaricious and the prodigal are punished, condemned for their attachment to material wealth: "They smote against each other, and then all turned upon the spot, rolling them back…" (72).

6.2. Naturalism and docu-poetry

As indicated above, the life-dramas being lived by the down and outs in Reading's docu-poetic text constitute an example of how the literary aesthetics known as Naturalism, linked almost always with fiction, yet applicable here, too, can play a key role in the poetry of social denouncement, social exposure, and public scandal. Newlin's remarks on writing in general, then, are applicable to poetry as generated by Reading in *Perduta Gente*: "Documentary description, based on observation, is probably the hallmark of naturalistic writing. Detailed description is common to both realism and naturalism, and for both genres, description functions as an effort to depict the truth of a scene, to show readers how it was" (Newlin 2011, 105). In the case of Link's morally-weighted, economics-based comment, it is necessary to recall how, in comparative terms, the down and outs in this docu-poem exist completely off the

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[20] See https://www.neh.gov/article/its-dantes-hell-were-just-living-it Accessed 01 Apr 2024.

socioeconomic scale while, as occurs in the poem with regard to the discourse type called in this Project "Letters-to-the-Editor," it is only extreme right-wing members of society who would label them as "vice-driven": "Naturalism is the term for those primarily realistic narratives that take as their subject matter vice-driven characters from lower socioeconomic strata" (2011, 80).

The development zone of London located near the River Thames and called the South Bank, in the vicinity of the Royal Festival Hall, would be the equivalent of a nineteenth-century New York scenario, as depicted in Stephen Crane's *Maggie*:

> Stephen Crane and Frank Norris were two of the first American naturalists to treat the city, and their responses to it reflected the complex national view of urban American [...] Crane and Norris both focused on impoverished areas within the city. what results is a radically new aesthetic, labeled "naturalist gothic" by Cristophe Den Tandt. [...] In such an aesthetic, the city inevitably functions as symbol as well as space. To some extent, the ethnic ghetto functions for Crane and Norris, as well as for later naturalists, as a metonym for the nightmare world of the unconscious. [...] The narrative perspective of Maggie, as in How the Other Half Lives, is that of a tour guide presenting the grotesque reality of New York City's Bowery district to the reader. (Giles 2011, 323)

Likewise, in a similar case of the transformation of the naturalistic, the subliminal presence of a nightmare, gothic scenario is sensed in Reading's docu-poem, as reflected paradigmatically in the poem on page 213:

> Dusty, crepuscular, vast;
> ranks of unfortunate supines fading
> into infinity;
> chamber or bunker or vault
> seemingly lacking extremities; coughing,
> puking, diarrhoea;
> drone of the crazy invisible exe-
> getist intoning
> Woe vnto woe unto woe
> vnto woe vnto woe vnto woe

Here, the sixth line of this decastich, within the ballade supreme tradition, reflects a further aesthetic transition, frequently found in Reading's composition, i.e. from the naturalistic and the gothic to the scatological,[21] the obscene, and the nauseous.[22]

What makes the linguistically nauseous and abject tolerable (i.e. pronounceable) to any reader of this docu-poem is the already-mentioned, rhythmically relevant caesura, thus generating the inevitable presence of hemistiches and, thereby, stabilizing each line, whether of 5, 7, or 11 syllables:

> nuns **II**[23] from St. Mungo's
> doling out **II** dry bread and soup.
> Mucky Preece **II** skinning a cat
> (bashed in its head **II** with a brick)
> to add to **II** the vegetal stew
> bubbling up **II** in the bucket,
> swayingly unzips **II** and waggles his penis,
> smirched **II** with the cat's gore,
> urinates into the face **II** of a Blessed
> Sister of Mercy. (196)

It is as if this action-reaction formula were having the effect of calming the nausea-inducing reaction of the reader, thus actually making reading feasible.

Taking on the role of the embedded reporter, as already exemplified, the following is eye-witnessed on page 193, in nauseous, obscene terms: "Hundreds of beds and the blankets is never / changed off the last one - / crabs, you can pick up like that. / No fucking plugs in the sinks." And again: "Bloke in the next bed to me (I could see him / pissed in his pillow / then he

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[21] Without going into detail, the following definitions of this kind of phenomenon may be considered useful: "Scatological: Of or pertaining to scatology; characterized by a preoccupation with obscenity." See: *OED*, s.v. "scatological (*adj*.)," July 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9702109013. Accessed 10 Apr 2024.
"Scatology: 3. 1876– Filthy literature." See: *OED*, s.v. "scatology (*n.*)," July 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4141745199. Accessed 10 Apr 2024.
"Profanity: The fact, quality, or condition of being profane; profane conduct or speech; (also) an instance of this, a profane or obscene act or word (frequently in plural)." See: *OED*, s.v. "profanity (*n.*)," July 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7169898996. Accessed 10 Apr 2024.
"Slang: Words and phrases which are very colloquial or informal, typically consisting of coinages, arbitrary modifications of existing words, playful or colorful figures of speech, coarse or offensive words, etc., and often used among younger people or (in a distinctive variety) among the members of a given group; such words and phrases considered collectively as a category of vocabulary." See: *OED*, s.v. "slang (*n.4*)," March 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1115265947. Accessed 10 Apr 2024.

[22] Although falling outside the scope of this Project, as far as the exemplification of the aesthetics of the obscene, the scatological, and the nauseous is concerned, the novel of extreme naturalism by the New Zealand novelist, Alan Duff, *Once Were Warriors* (1990), has been taken into account (London: Vintage, 1990).

[23] Henceforth, the caesura to be used in a series of quoted lines will be indicated thus in bold type.

just slept on it wet. / Some of em masturbates, loud." Keeping in mind what has just been suggested as being rhythmically relevant, also to be noted is how the epigrammatic mode employed here turns discourse chains into headline style, thus enabling the intolerable (in reading) to become dosed and brought under control, thus allowing for the filtering of emotional hyperbole.

On page 200 a further example of technical control over hendecasyllabic, septenary, and five-syllable lines, especially through the caesura-hemistich factor, points to how it is in this way, reading-wise, the act of reading / recitation of such nauseous material is made possible, made tolerable:

> Icy December: three rank expendables
> squat on a split tomb
> covered in carroty spew
> one has his cock loose and pisses all over him-
> self and his colleagues –
> steam from both this and their breaths.

Meanwhile, it may also be possible to affirm, although challenging to confirm, it must be stated, that the lines of five and seven syllables so essential to the simple beauty of haiku compositions may also point to how the poetic in Reading is indeed present within the discourse of documentary.

6.3. Rhythm

Taking into account some of the brief references already made to poetic rhythm in the previous section, while also keeping in mind that a thorough study of the rhythmic component of Reading's poetic compositions in *Perduta Gente*, as well as elsewhere in his output, would require a study that exceeds the limits of this kind of Project, here it is a certain limited number of observations in this regard which are provided. Thus, it is the *presence* of rhythmically identifiable phenomena which needs to be emphasized. This same presence can be visually and metaphorically / meta-poetically illustrated perhaps by referencing the special-effect technique at the end of the docu-poem where, supposedly, as a representation of the effects of substance abuse, words are seen to overlap and blur, i.e. the visual-graphic equivalent of the sonic gurgling highlighted in Dante's "Inferno" (Alighieri 1858, 79), as already indicated: "squit / raus," "meths / leak," etc. (214). Likewise, formally recognizable rhythmic configurations may be said to have a 'blurred' presence in *Perduta Gente*.

Likewise, while a deeper analysis would be required, as already indicated, the presence (the equivalent of the already-mentioned blurring and overlapping visual effects) of certain rhythmic features, each with a function, seems to be identifiable. It is the technically / formally detailed nature of each of these functions that would require further analysis elsewhere.

Upon observing and reciting the poems out loud, a number of rhythmic patterns do indeed become detectable at certain times: (a) the frequent use of a hendecasyllabic lines followed by penta-syllabic lines; (b) the relatively frequent use of septenary lines; (c) in a descending rank of frequency, the use of nine-syllable lines; (d) the number of lines per poem, together with their stanzaic distribution, echo the approximate presence of much more formal, traditionally accentual-syllabic poetic configurations. In the case of the poem on page 206, (a) is clearly present: "Legions of comatose owners of nothing (11 syllables) / under the concrete (5 syllables) …;"

> radioactive spent rods, (7)
> bound for reprocessing from the reactors, (11)
> carried in finned flasks, (5)
> rumble by railway by night through a city (11)
> hugely unconscious. (5)

In the final tercet of this same composition on page 206, the first two lines repeat the pattern: "Grief-bitten impotent owners of nothing, (11) / holding opinions (5) / gagged, disregarded, unsought (7)."

If another rhythmic factor, probably the most recognizable of all throughout the work, is taken into account, it is the already-mentioned historical nature of the poem-as-discourse that continues to stand out, especially if, as indicated above, the technical factor of the caesura that divides lines into half-lines (hemistiches) within the tradition of Anglo-Saxon verse is taken into account.[24] In this sense, the 11-syllable / 5-syllable combinations generate 3 half-lines (2+1): "Something in the wind: ‖ terrible storms, an / absence of ozone…" (207). History being recorded, in terms of ecological and socio-cultural catastrophes, is thus historicized through versification techniques that span the centuries. The septenaries which are also frequent

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[24] "Primarily unilingual, Anglo,Saxon had few foreign resources on which to draw. Words, especially qualitative ones, had therefore to be formed or compounded from the existing vocabulary, often with considerable poetic effect. This compounding was not limited, however, to articles or qualities for which no other word existed, but was frequently practiced for the sake of variation through a multiplicity of synonym. 'Kenning', or word compounding, also took the form of condensed metaphor" (Kossick 1969, 44).
"The basic unit is a four-stress alliterative line, similar to that found in the other Germanic languages. A line is made up of two parts (half-lines a and b): each part contains two strongly stressed syllables and a variable number of lightly stressed ones. The foundation of this system lies in the alternation of stressed an unstressed syllable, and in the alliteration of the initial sounds of words in metrical position" (Lendinara 2017, 128).

throughout the long poem lend themselves to the emergence of hemistiches: "10,000 **ǁ** undesired drums [of leaking radioactive waste] …" (207). Further examples may be found: "sizzles and bubbles **ǁ** and fumes / fizzing from leaks **ǁ** in the rust **ǁ** in the full glare of the sun…"

Contamination is projected as a historically global phenomenon, reaching the Arctic Circle, via another 11-syllable / 5-syllable, 2+1 half-line combination: "Piled in a ruck in the tundra **ǁ** a tump of / Geigering reindeer… (204). The poem continues thus: "Meanwhile the trains **ǁ** with their sinister finned flasks / **ǁ** carrying spent rods / [hurtle perpetually on]…" Likewise, the sense of counterpointing generated by the half-line format even recalls Renaissance madrigal compositions; "masses and loonies, **ǁ** / alcos and other misfortunates **ǁ** make dole / **ǁ** one of whom ventures: **ǁ** / I think this planet **ǁ** is fucked (7 syllables); / not just me **ǁ** but the whole planet, **ǁ** fucked (9 syllables)." The overlapping of horrendous subject-matter and the aesthetic technicalities of poetic versification also subliminally suggest the 'blurred' presence of a traditional 9-line roundel here.

In the case of the poem that appears on page 196, the notions expressed by John Thompson acquire relevance: "The half-line [keeping in mind how in Reading 5-syllable lines seem to acquire half-line status, as indicated above) is more than a trick of style. It is a necessity, and it must be clearly indicated with all but complete consistency…by patterns chosen from those of ordinary speech. [Reading as an example of this fusion of the poetic and the demotic ….] does not depend on alliteration or position for the location of lifts; the pattern of speech must locate them, as it must locate the junctures" (Thompson 1966, 45). As a result, the lines in the poem on page 196 are uttered relentlessly, as if each of them were a headline almost: "Week of continuous Blue, **ǁ** / total amnesia, **ǁ** no recollection of / **ǁ** date or condition…"

The string of 7-syllable lines (septenaries) reinforces the sense of relentlessness (the rhythm recalling that of Sylvia Plath's "Daddy," at certain moments) as desperation:

> nuns from St. Mungo's (5 syllables)
> doling out dry bread and soup, (7)
> Mucky Preece skinning a cat (7)
> (bashed in its head with a brick) (7)
> to add to the vegetal stew (7-8)
> bubbling up in the bucket…. (7)

Meanwhile the 11-syllable / 5 syllable combination returns in what remains of this highly scatological poem; Mucky Preece continues to be the grammatical subject:

      swayingly unzips and waggles his penis, (11)
      smirched with the cat's gore, (5)
      urinates into the face of a Blessed (11)
      Sister of Mercy. (5)

Meanwhile, the doleful, prophetic tone of the poem on page 197 continues to recall this same aforementioned composition by Plath: "And don't think it couldn't be *you*: /… /dolent the wail from the Tube…"

It is as if the theorist-practitioner poets of the mid-twentieth century, such as Karl Shapiro, made it clear that, somehow, contemporary poetry tends to be rhythmical without drawing excessive attention to that same reality: "In English verse the theoretical rhythmical accent is not merely omitted but deliberately contradicted, a principle which is foreign to music. And this contradicting of accent in verse, strangely enough, does not disturb our perception of rhythmical uniformity" (1947, 79)

As indicated at the start of this section on rhythm, although being a phenomenon that would need to be clarified further in Reading's case, what has been identified in this Project as counterpointing and contrastive progression, in which headline-type affirmations acquire relevance, is a fundamental characteristic of this poet's art. The eighteen-line poem on page 180, subliminally echoing the form known as a heroic sonnet, is again voiced as a public, prophetic *persona*, a spokesperson for the down and outs:

      sometimes it seems like a terrible dream, in (11 syllables)
      which we are crouching (5)
      gagged, disregarded, unsought (7)
      in dosshouses, derries and spikes, (7-8)
      and from which we shall awake (7)
      mostly it seems, though, we won't. (7)

An echo of Yeats's "terrible beauty" being "born" in "The Second Coming" (1920) may seem to be present in the first of the lines cited here, while the reference to "crouching" subliminally seems to echo the lines that describe the horrors and inhuman conditions of those imprisoned in the trenches of the First World War in Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est*" 1917)* : "Bent double, like old beggars under sacks, / Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge…" (1994, 29).

Returning to the presence of hendecasyllabic lines in Reading, the scatological, obscene, nauseous content of *Perduta Gente* as a docu-poem would, plausibly at least, seem to constitute a present-day version of the so-called erotic, quasi-indecent verse-writings by the Roman poet, Catullus: "The hendecasyllable gave too much attention to love which was dangerously

enervating to men, although many […] were indignant at their obscenity. [Rather,] gossip produced by liaisons [was what was reflected in them]" (Hack 1914, 109–10).

6.4. Language as history *per se*

As will be argued in this section, it is the role of history *per se* in *Perduta Gente* that acquires relevance, as well as the factor of the interaction of history and literature through language. In this sense, the author of this Project has always been impressed by the words of Geoffrey Hill (1932-2016), the English poet who took up residence in the United States. In the first place, the title of his composition "History as Poetry" (1968, 41) is worthy of note, as is also the following affirmation he makes: "In handling the English language the poet makes an act of recognition that etymology is history" (Haffenden 1981, 88)

What also acquires relevance in historically linguistic and sociocultural terms is how the presence of London becomes iconically identifiable with history *per se* in this poetic work by Reading. To a certain extent, also, the factor of the value of history in this docu-poem is also linked with the legendary-mythic value often attached to cities such as London: the city of the Roman period, the city of the merchants of the medieval period, the London of Elizabeth I, Shakespeare and Jonson, the Georgian London that emerges out of the ashes of the Great Fire, the Victorian metropolis, the heroic London of the Blitz, etc., while the reference to the Festival Hall recalls the historical event of the post-war Festival of Britain of 1951 (193), aimed at exhibiting and glorifying the nation, and the capital's, economic and scientific compromise with post-war, modern progress. Yet, the social consciousness that underpins this docu-poem demands that yuppie London, identifiable with alarming social inequality, together with the debasement and degradation of human beings, also be included in any account of the evolution of the capital city.

Thus, it is that London, and its iconic river, functions as a socio-historical protagonist throughout the poem, transmitting a sense of nostalgia (which is ironically undermined by the Dantesque, nightmare scenario projected). Relevant, in this sense, is the reference to the "South Bank" of the Thames in the opening poem on page 160, together with headlines in the Property-Page sections projected graphically: "London's most exciting apartments all have river views…" (161). Likewise, the references to the outlying districts of the capital on these same pages establish a direct link with the medieval city: "Eastham," "Tenbury," "Worfield," "Cleobury Mortimer," "Milson" (161), while the references to the church of St Botolph's, at Aldgate (169), founded in the Middle Ages, also triggers a sense of unsustainable, it must be said, nostalgia, given the nature of the poem's social and ethical ethos.

Such unsustainability, in socio-cultural and socio-historical terms, is also transmitted through the phrase "the gates of the city" (171), together with the use of the medieval term "Bailiffs" (187), associated with feudalism. The terminology of feudal law also appears: "caitiffs whose deep-wailing plaints…" (188). In this same ironic sense, the naming of "Euston" (174) constitutes a direct link to the days of the vast feudal estates of the Dukes of Grafton on the site of present-day Camden, while the allusion to "Borough" (198) refers culturally to the first London produce market, also founded in the Middle Ages. Relevant in this regard is the reference to the figure of the "ostler" (160), the porter-like figure employed in London's markets since the Middle Ages. The fact of this commercial landmark's location at Southwark (198) may even seem to generate a nostalgic cultural link with "The Prologue" to Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales,* while the allusions to "wreck-buoy" and "dunes" (167) seem to bring to mind the role played by the Thames and its estuary in Dickens' *Great Expectations*.

Finally, in terms of a poetic irony of the bitterest kind, given the inhuman treatment of the down and outs by the authorities, as detailed throughout Reading's docu-poem, the London-linked reference that stands out is that of "Old Bill" (170), the quaint nickname assigned to the Metropolitan Police (170). Thus, it is that, as suggested by the term docu-poem, language interacts with the historical and material textures of existence so as to confirm *Perduta Gente* as, both paradoxically and memorably, the aesthetic manifestation of historical reality.

Linguistically and aesthetically speaking, one of the key characteristics of the interaction of the lexical and phonetic components of the lines at many points in the composition is the sonic abundance and variety that is experienced during the process of reading / recitation:

> tolls from a wreck-buoy, **II** swung by the reflux;
> wardens **II** in green jeeps
> dapperly-uniformed, **II** plump
> skedaddlers of squatters **II** and tramps… (166)

Moreover, what may be considered a kind of celebration of the English language is ironically set against the nature of the contents being described:

> *Gente perduta*, **II** wino-unworthies,
> Knackered-up **II** dipsos
> Swilling *rosato-* **II** and-meths –
> We snooped a look **II** in their lairs… (167)

Likewise, in terms of rhythm, the already-mentioned presence of hemistiches in the lines generates a sensation of the relentless pace of existence, as if to suggest history is actually in the making, while, again ironically, the idea being projected is that the down-and-outs are being excluded from that same history. Relentlessness and abundance are belied, therefore, while poetry is thus making history thereby.

This gushing exuberance in language almost seems to be surrealistic at times, as the nightmare existence of the down and outs' underworld unfolds:

> Eyes like an elephant's, **II** blood-bleared and tiny,
> gowkily **II** ogle;
> tremulous wart-knuckled **II** pachyderm fingers
> fumble **II** a tin cup;
> skewers of carp flesh **II** fumed to mahogany;
> dark-crusted **II** rye loaf;
> sloshed spirit **II** hissing in ash. (171)
> …
> Sleep-fuddled dissolutes **II** still dressing cold dis-
> consolate **II** bratlings,
> struggle with **II** carrier-bags (170)

In this same sense, the language becomes absorbed by the aesthetics of the grotesque and, in turn, by the scatological and the nauseous:

> After the meths she was honking and honking –
> front of the frayed mac
> stippled with vegetal bits,
> surgical Spirit-beslimed. (188)

Such degradation is also expressed in naturalistic, documentary-type language, while functioning as testimonial discourse, journalistically speaking: "Hundreds of beds and the blankets is never / changed off the last one - / crabs, you can pick up like that. / No fucking plugs in the sinks;" (188) … "Bloke in the next bed to me (I could see him / pissed in his pillow / then he just slept on it wet. / Some of em masturbates, loud" (188).

At the same time, and ironically so, that same degradation is expressed via Latinate, aureate language and a voice of refinement: "Outside Victoria Station a quorum of / no-hoper fetid / impromptu imbibers / is causing a shindy…" (191). It is as though this work were being projected by a voice which is affirming how it is art's responsibility to bring life's degradation and injustices to the attention of society. This fusion also emerges in the poem found on page 193 in which, tellingly so, the down and outs, in their quest for bodily warmth, are found

wrapped in pages of the real-estate publications which advertise astronomically priced London properties:

> Wound round a varicose indigo swollen
> leg, between second
> and third pair of trousers (which stink –
> urine and faeces and sick),
> Property Pages delineate bijou
> River-View Flatlets LONDON
> £600,000 each.

Likewise, these lines act as a reminder of how, as already mentioned, this docu-poem also reflects a collage-based aesthetics.

In terms of the generation of a sense of history being lived, despite the negativity implied in its conception in the case of this docu-poem, it is the etymological dimension of the work's language that acquires relevance and presence.[25] The linguistic inheritance enclosed in the poem is limitless, as in the case of the lines quoted above.

For example, the presence of terms with origins in Old French abound, exemplifiable as follows: "brick" ['briche'] (196); "stew" ['estuver'] (196); "smirch" ['esmorcher' = 'to torture'] (197); "platitude" (197); "marge" (201); "tumbril" (160) ['tumbrel']; "ostler" 160 ['ostelier']; "bray" (160) ['braire']; "traverse" ['traverser']; "epilation" (196) ['épilation']; "bijou" (193).

In general, the origins of lexical items and terms are richly varied: "wreck" (167) Old Norse; "buoy" (167) Old French and Middle Dutch; "swung" (167) Proto-Germanic ['swangwi']; "warden" (167) Frankish ['warding']; "dapper" (167) Middle Dutch; "plump" (167) Swedish; "tramp" (167) Middle Low German; "unworth[y]" (160) Middle Low German ['unwerdich']; "swill" (167) a Proto-Germanic word; "snoop[ ]" (167) Old Dutch ('snoepen'); "lair" (167) Old Norwegian ['legr' = 'the grave']; "waggle" (196) Old High German ['wackeln']; "shacks" (167) Mexican Spanish ['jacal']; "bankrupted" (173) Italian ['banca rotta'].

Meanwhile, in contrast to the etymological strand identifiable as having Germanic origins, Latinate and Greek-based terms obviously appear: "uniform;" "reflux;" the links of "squatter[ ]" (209) with 'coactus' in Latin and 'coactire' in Vulgar Latin ('to force together'). Relevant in this sense is "dipso[ ]," (167) having its origins in the Greek word for `thirst´ ['dipsa'], together with "meth[ ]" (167) being derived from the Greek term for 'wine' ['methy'].

Indeed, throughout the work Latinate terms abound, the meta-poetic implication of their (inevitable) frequency seeming to be that history, and ironically so, is no longer conceivable in terms of civilization and grandeur: "exhalations," "expiry," "tenebrous," "distress" (160); "extremities" (230); "puke" ['spew'] (200); "Maximart" (2009); "reactor" (206); "dolent" (206); "involve" (206); "fenestration" (162) ['fenestrāre']; "tetrous" (163); "pediculous" (163) ['pediculosus'].

Latinate and Greek-based terms also emerge within the already-mentioned discourse types that characterize the visually / graphically relevant pages which project medical advice, as well as scientific terminology specifically related to nuclear fusion: "rapid emaciation" (211) Latin rapidus and ēmaciātiōn-em; "stochastich" (211) Greek ['στοχαστικός']; gamma activity (189) Latin ['gamma,'] Greek ['γάμμα'] and Latin ['activitat-,' 'activitas']; radiation (189) Latin ['radiātiōn-,' 'radiātiō']. Likewise, the following terms, amongst many others, may be cited: "… fission xenon iodine tellurium caesium ruthenium" (177); "Argon 41" (181). In fact, keeping in mind the theme of social consciouness that sustains this docu-poem, it becomes disturbingly obvious that the realities of the down-and-outs' existence, on the one hand, together with that of the extent of the environmental degradation being enacted at any moment, on the other, constitute alarming zones of ignorance in contemporary existence.

Likewise, terms occur that have specific, 'anecdotical' origins, as in the case of "jeep" (the acronym for General Purpose car in military terms), or "skedaddle" (167) a word generated during the American Civil War, while "knackered" is derived from an ancient Scandinavian term for 'neck'. Moreover, "JCB" (167) which initially was a trademark for construction equipment named after Joseph Cyril Bamford; "batty" (173) a slang word that probably comes from 'bats in the belfry,' implying craziness; or "fezzed" (179) derived from 'fez', a typical Turkish hat.

7. The new dimension: enriching the text through music.
7.1. General considerations

When composing the contents of the set of musical performances with which an attempt is being made to enrich *Perduta Gente*, it has been necessary to establish certain delimitations and general lines of action, to enable the approach to the work and its development under the formal requirements of this End-of-Master's Project.

Firstly, in terms of form and length, the following has been taken into account: Although the ideal would be to create an individual composition for each page, for example, or for each identifiable linguistic or graphic unit within the docu-poem as a whole, for inevitable reasons

of space, the range of creative pieces generated corresponds to, or symbolizes, each of the already-mentioned, representative discursive strands that contribute to Reading's work as a whole. With this in mind, a total of eight compositions of between thirty seconds and one minute each have been composed. For a future audiovisual project, it would be necessary to adapt the duration of each piece to what the communicative intention required by the context in each case would recommend. In practical terms, therefore, with regard to the potential musical treatment given to the work, the creative samples exemplified here have been calibrated in terms of what may be called the composer's didactic sixth sense, as far as duration is concerned.

Likewise, the variety of instruments used in the process of composition has been limited in each case, given that each one, or each group of them, has been assigned an identity associated with the different aspects of *Perduta Gente*. In other words, each instrument, or sound, within the work represents the characterization of some voice or other, or a specific character, or a type of speech in the work, while the choices made will be justified later in this section.

Firstly, a set of classical orchestral instruments (double bass, cello, viola, and violin) is employed to represent the poetic voice at work throughout the text, viz, what has been identified as the *voice-over*. Along the same lines, the truncated sections of *Perduta Gente* that have been identified as the voice of the already-mentioned How-They-Made-It documentary, i.e. the implied author in narratological terms, will be represented by orchestral percussion instruments.

Secondly, the pop band format of the 80s has been selected, i.e. guitar, keyboards, drums, and bass, to represent the visual aspect of newspaper advertisements. Thirdly, the ukulele has been used as a solo instrument so as to represent the photocopied pages torn from handwritten reporter's notepad.

Moreover, in terms of instrumentation, a sound close to that of a balalaika has been selected, with a clear Eastern-European sound influence so as to represent one of the protagonists of the poem's narrative strand, 'Boris the Swine' (also identifiable as the ostracized power-station technician).Likewise, synthesizers have been selected, and which emit marked industrial and alarm-based sounds, to represent the 'nuclear aspects' of the docu-poem, while a range of sound effects and voice presences are also employed so as to enhance the atmospherics of the pieces.

It should also be noted that all the musical input has been created, performed, and recorded for this End-of-Master's Project[26], keeping in mind that an index of the proposed musical pieces has been provided in Appendix I, including a link[27] to a streaming service where the work can be listened to on demand.

7.2. Justification

7.2.1. Track 01

This first composition acts as the opening to the work, laying down the melodic foundations that will be replicated throughout. At the same time, it has been conceived of by way of a presentation and general summary of the work. Here in this piece is where the musical weight is carried by the classical orchestra. As mentioned previously, this set of instruments has been selected to represent the poetic-voice-as-voice-over precisely because of its classical character, to a certain extent reminiscent of the great musical works of history, acting as the equivalent of the poetic structures used by Reading, derived as they are, formally speaking, from the poetic tradition.

Firstly, the main feature that attracts the listener's attention is the sound environment within which the piece evolves. What emerges is the musicalization of the imaginary context in which the poem on page 160 of *Perduta Gente* develops. Footsteps are heard, thereby symbolizing the entry into the Dantesque 'hell' created by Reading, accompanied by the voices of the "expendables, eyesores, winos, unworthies" that inhabit it. Moreover, the tone suggests the intoxication to which they succumb. What are also projected are the sounds they make: vulgar, profane, and violent, while, in the background, fire, as a ritualistic element of the 'tribe,' is heard and which, in turn, acquires a prophetic function due to the role it will end up playing in the destiny of the camp and the derelict property.

On the other hand, and in complete contrast with what was just been stated, the orchestral section performs a funeral passage based on the classic structure associated with the genre of chamber music. What is unexpected is the impingement of the sounds identifiable with flatulence or broken glass while listening to an orchestral piece. Yet, that is precisely the friction that is achieved poetically by amalgamating cultivated language and classical poetic structures, on the one hand, and, on the other, profane expressions and a theme based on social exclusion and degradation. Precisely, it is that same friction, paradigmatically inherent not only to this

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[26] The author of this End-of-Master's Project is a professional musician and songwriter known as Migué Chupete, currently working as a touring guitarist for Beret, one of the most popular pop artists in Spain. He has been composing music and lyrics for other artists and himself for more than 10 years now.

[27] See: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNWXD0x_f9hLtTV57wBY1C8R_xxbeVqql

specific section on page 160 but to *Perduta Gente* as a whole, which the musical content of the composition is attempting to replicate.

It is important to note the fragment that runs between 00:15 and 00:30, identifiable as the work's central melody, will appear for the first time, and which henceforth here will be termed the 'melody of the down and outs'. This melody, played at this point by a viola, will be the cornerstone of this composer's compositions. It is upon the basis of this melody, while keeping in mind the appropriate changes required in order to transmit the desired feeling in each case, that the rest of the musical pieces contained in the work will be built. It is a relatively simple melody, melancholic in character, and which develops in a harmonic context of minor chords.

As noted above, this musical piece not only functions as a way of representing the first composition found in this docu-poem, but also as a snapshot of the work as a whole. It is in this sense that the intra-textual character of *Perduta Gente* acquires its relevance so as to underline how the intermingling of the selected musical elements, each representative of a voice or of a discursive strand, gives rise to a kind of interactive dialogue among them which, to a certain extent at least, replicates Reading's intra-textual dynamic.

It is in terms of this aesthetic that what is projected is the simultaneity of the balalaika sound, representative of 'Boris the Swine,' on the one hand, together with the synthesizer, as the projection of the sense of nuclear alarm (from 00:30 on), on the other. This synthesizer input will progressively increase in terms of volume, generating a sensation of 'distress' that symbolizes the threat of contact with the dangerous materials emitted as part of the radioactive leak from the nuclear power-station to which a series of references are made throughout the docu-poem. Furthermore, at 00:15, it is orchestral percussion that acquires sudden relevance, interpretable in terms of the identification with the How-They-Made-It *voice-over* that, as mentioned above, is perceived as existing beyond the *voice-over* that is detectable throughout the docu-poem.

At the beginning of this docu-poem, Reading refers to the composer Sibelius and his *Fifth Symphony*, characterized by its "incontrovertible end" (160), in which staggered blows are sensed to be sounding at that end the work (Oslo Philharmonic 2011, 30:44). In turn, the poetic *voice-over* also recreates these strokes at the end of the poem:

> squit,
> honk,
> piss,
> meths,
> distress.

Thus, it would seem both aesthetically and narratively relevant to include this ending in terms of its musical relevance, starting at 00:45, where all the instruments in unison perform the sound strokes, leading to a sustained beat that brings to a close this "foetid tenebrous concert / strobed by blue light ambulance" (160).

7.2.2. Track 02

For this piece of music, which represents the newspaper clip related to one of the advertisements which appears on page 161, the pop band format has been selected, with a drummer and a bass following a marked rhythm, while a sense of 'uplifting,' typical of pop songs is transmitted, and while keyboards and guitar play a modified version of this composer's already-mentioned 'melody of the down and outs'. This set of instruments has been selected, on the one hand, because they seem representative of the social group to which it is directed (mainly yuppies), and, on the other hand, to establish a sharp contrast with the strategy followed so as to represent the rest of the voices. This contrast, thematically speaking, also reinforces the idea of the tremendous social inequality that pervades this work.

As far as harmony is concerned, as mentioned previously, a modification of the central melody has been undertaken, transforming it to major keys in order to change the emotion that needs to be transmitted: the sadness and melancholy characteristic of Track 01 becomes here carefreeness and nonchalance within the piece. It could be argued that what is being generated is a musical parallel with the sales language used in the advertisement on page 161, by superficially transforming the musical content so as to make it more attractive and carefree to the listener. In addition, five sound hits typical of a cash register have been incorporated (00:17), thereby emphasizing, on the one hand, the capitalist milieu within which the advertisement evolves and, on the other, recalling the symbolic reference to Sibelius included in Track 01.

This track also includes a *voice-over*, recorded by the author of this Project, where excerpts from the advertisement are 'recited' (at 00:15): "London's most exciting apartments all have river views!" (161), while it is the projection of a radio-broadcast tone that is aimed at, i.e. an audio publicity spot as the equivalent of the printed advertisement. Likewise, ironically relevant are the cheers and applause which can be heard in the background (00:10), again symbolizing a yuppie presence in the London of the late 1980s.

7.2.3. Track 03

In this track, 03, an attempt is made to create a sound dimension for page 164 of *Perduta Gente*, while, with slight modifications, its aesthetic character could be made extensive to all

the linguistic-visual instances of the handwritten jottings that form the contents of the reporter's notepad, as used by the hypothetical infiltrated journalist.

This piece also contains a ukulele solo, which further develops a simplified version of the already-mentioned central melody, easily recognizable (00:09 to 00:14). It may even be argued that the ukulele's discursive function is based on how there exists a certain parallel with a notepad in terms of size, portability, and convenience. Furthermore, by sliding the string vertically on the instrument's neck, a sound can be reproduced that is somewhat similar to that of a pen in contact with paper (00:02). Moreover, to symbolize the process of handwriting, a free tempo has been used in the composition. That is, the rhythm varies, accelerating and decelerating at the whim of the performer, as in the case of a person involved in the physical act of writing *per se*.

On the other hand, in this piece the aim is to represent, subliminally, the events that are narrated on the notepad. In this case, a situation experienced in the camp that expresses the agony of one of these down and outs: "terribly sick with her meths, but she kept on and on vomiting through the night" (164). What is detectable here is how the ukulele interprets the main melodic line (00:08) and then generates a short pause on some discordant notes (00:14). In this case, the aim here is to represent the line "so that between honks she screamed horribly" (164), understanding as screams the most discordant sounds on the ukulele, and which will intensify later. Finally, starting at 00:25 there is a tensional crescendo, with a marked discordant character followed by silence, the aim being to represent the moment of resolution reached in the Reading excerpt "the only sleep we got was after one of the old hands dragged her off, still screaming, and dumped her in the alley round the corner where the dustbins are" (164).

7.2.4. Track 04

In this piece, in musical terms, the sound identity created aims to reflect the type of speech found exemplified on page 182. Such a piece of enactment involves the How-They-Did-It *voice-over* which comments on the figure of the infiltrated journalist. The lack of harmonic musical content is intentional, thereby implying that this constitutes an external voice which does not actively participate in the events that occur in real time in the docu-poem, while lacking a first-person view of the down and outs.

7.2.5. Track 05

In this case, it is the variation on the *voice-over* found on page 165 which is represented. It is linguistic distortion which is reflected, manifested as gurgling, as previously analyzed, due

to substance abuse. As a feature of such musical characterization, it is a piano which has been chosen as the main instrument to be exploited. Furthermore, the instrument has been configured so that it is slightly out of tune, thus seeking to replicate what occurs in terms of phonetic-phonological vocal blurring with regard to the protagonist concerned.

Musically, a further variation on the central melody becomes detectable, executed this time in a sloppy way, including notes that do not belong to the scale, deliberate errors that serve as a parallel to those made orthographically on the page as a graphic reflection of dysfunctional mental processes. Furthermore, there is a set tempo that the piece should conform to, but which has been interpreted in such a way that much of the piece lies outside the tempo frame. In this way, at some moments it seems hurried and at others it drags, thereby symbolizing the vocal rhythm of someone intoxicated.

Moreover, an excerpt from the poem has been included, while respect for the intended transmission of energy, as interpreted by the composer, is heard to act as a factor in performance. In addition, sound effects are generated which serve as key points in the development of the narrative process. For example, at 00:06 the sound of a harmonica is heard to coincide with the following textual content "fugginwell busted harmonica playin" (165). Later, at 00:14, the "clackety-clack" (165) of the elevator is reproduced. Thus, such sonic features act as relevant narrative conduits.

Around 00:19, the most intense phase of this same episode in the London underground station is represented, i.e. the moment of the accident and subsequent action by the police: "mashessa blood inna cetchup da coppers draggin er screamin…" (165). As occurs in Track 03, the screams heard are projected through sonic dissonances, while the context of chaos is generated rhythmically in terms of factors of acceleration and unpredictability. As a final point of stylistic relevance as far as this Track 05 is concerned, the previously five sound strokes as produced on the already-mentioned synthesizer, 00:19-00:25, recall the Sibelius symphony phrasing.

7.2.6. Track 06

With regard to the processes involved in the composition of relevant musical content in a potential audiovisual creation of *Perduta Gente* as docu-poem, what is also highlighted is the linguistic-graphic discursive strand involving the documents dealing with the risks and consequences of radioactive leakage in the nuclear power station, a phenomenon that forms part of the text's narrative dimension.

Specifically, in this case, what is set to music in this extract can be found on page 211, which revolves around the health implications of contact with the type of radioactive waste being exemplified. As already employed, the alarm synthesizer sound as the main instrumental procedural factor returs, and continuously so from the beginning to the end of the piece.

Moreover, a second synthesizer has been incorporated into the sequence which plays a variation on the central melody of the down and outs, this time in a more mechanical and simplified version, thereby adding a certain degree of mysticism to these moments in the work. Likewise, the balalaika sound continues to identify the character of 'Boris the Swine,' whose presence here highlights the relationship that his character maintains in the story with the role of being a technician at the nuclear power plant who, as indicated before, steals the documents which constitute the visual-graphic content of the pages concerned. As is known the theft will initiate his downhill trajectory both in social and professional terms, leading to the phase of his life as a drug addict and down and out (195). The musical representation of such a downfall on the balalaika implies an initial phase marked by soft rhythmic movements (00:25), leading to a moment of acceleration, which also involves repeating the same succession of notes in an uncontrolled manner (00:51).

Likewise, this melodic succession of the balalaika-based sequence could also be applied to the poetic lines which appear on page 176:

Often at evening he plangently strums and
bays from the birch wood,
where he reposes, this strain:
nothing can ever be done;
things are intractably thus;

In addition, a *voice-over* has been included in the background, which involves the recitation of some of the side effects of radiation sickness, as referenced on page 211. The voice concerned has been musically distorted so as to represent the cuts made in the text and which leave some words illegible or difficult to recognize.

Lastly, the sound effects employed as background material have been used to enhance a nuclear laboratory setting: a bubbling sound, together with sonic features identifiable with the sound emitted by a radiation detector.

7.2.7. Track 07

In this piece of music special attention is paid to the figure of 'Boris the Swine.' Although he does not act as a voice as such, nor is assigned his own direct / indirect speech

content within the work, here, in this potential soundtrack, he is assigned his own musical theme due to his importance within what may called the plot and given that he is the character for which most context is provided. His story is hinted at on a range of pages, starting with his presentation on page 176, where for the first time it is revealed that "he worked at the Station," while on pages 184 and 195 details of his personal past are provided. With regard to page 186, it can be argued that he is the subject of the line "he came to the window and emptied a briefcase," the action that makes public the nuclear accident.

The compositional aim involves the representation of what may be called his life journey, starting with a melody in major chords that evokes calm, peace and tranquility (00:00-00:13) that reflects the following data: "quite posh, he was" (195). At 00:15 Boris' contact with the radioactive leak, symbolized by the already-mentioned alarm synthesizer, while the musical setting begins to reflect a sense of somberness and darkness. In the background, the orchestral instruments linked with the poetic *voice-over* begin to be discerned and which, on this occasion, imply his contact with it. In the stretch of bars that evolve between 00:15 to the end, the balalaika sound transforms little by little until it interprets the already-recognizable central melody of the down and outs, thus marking Boris's decline into their type of life.

7.2.8. Track 08

The last piece created within this selection corresponds to the prophetic warning found on page 197 and which is repeated at several moments throughout the docu-poem: "don't think it couldn't be you." It is possible to argue argue that this phrase could be somehow related to that of 'there but for the grace of God go I,' defined by the *OED* as follows: "It is only through God's grace or (in later use more generally) factors beyond my control that I have not suffered the fate of someone more unfortunate than myself,"[28] However, while this expression symbols gratitude or sympathy, the one that is found on *Perduta Gente* rather acts as a prophetic warning.

In musical terms, in order to transmit this prophetic warning, the same format, as employed in Track 02, is directed at what has already been identified as the yuppie audience. On page 197, moreover, the ironic implication is that even someone belonging to such a privileged group can end up being identified, via melody, with the down-and-outs (00:25 onwards). The sonic allusion to the fourth movement of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, the so-called "Hymn to Joy," given its association with the European Union, functions as a somber reminder of the geographically widespread nature of the down-and-outs issue. In creatively ironic terms,

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[28] *OED*, s.v. "grace of God (n.)," September 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6784303852.

therefore, the Beethoven-linked melody is played on the electric guitar at the beginning of the work, while gradually overlapping with the down-and-outs melody (00:10).

8. Conclusions and final remarks

Given that this End-of-Degree Project has aimed from the outset to provide as relevant a study as possible of *Perduta Gente* (1989) within what has become a tradition involving the phenomenon of docu-poetry, the matter of Peter Reading's possible comparison with other specific poets has not been broached in any pinpointed way and yet in section 2, those fundamental comparisons have indeed been broached. Nevertheless, even though the wide-ranging social and cultural consciousness of a W.H. Auden[29], a Carol Ann Duffy,[30] a Derek Walcott,[31] or a Geoffrey Hill[32] may be said to be detectable in Reading's docu-poem published in 1989, it is with the American poet, Susan Howe (b. 1937), the author of *My Emily Dickinson* (1985) and *Singularities* (1990), that the greatest affinity lies, as has also been underlined within this Project. There is a sense in which the impact generated by the collage-based composition, *Perduta Gente*, would contribute, as in the case of Howe, to Reading becoming "[another] idiosyncratic, important, and influential…poet" ("Susan Howe" 2024).

Although not cited in detail in the *Poetry Foundation* article being dealt with here, the following words may also be said to be relevant when making reference to both Reading in his docu-poem and to the figure of Howe: "'[Each] is a kind of post-structuralist visionary" (2024). Likewise, in technical-aesthetic terms, the following observations acquire relevance:

> Howe has sometimes placed her verse upside-down, or crossed out parts of it, or let the words overlap each other, characteristics that may have to do with her early training as a visual artist. Some critics have likened her poems to paintings on the page, the large gaps between words providing white spaces that are meant to convey as much meaning as the words themselves. ("Susan Howe" 2024)

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[29] "W.H. Auden was a major English poet, probably the most important English-speaking poet born in the twentieth century. Noted especially for native lyrical gifts and highly developed technical expertise, he also displayed wide reading and acute intelligence in his poems" (Johnson 1983).

[30] "Carol Ann Duffy, who was named Britain's Poet Laureate in 2009, is the poet of "post-post war England: Thatcher's England," according to *Mosaic* contributor Danette DiMarco. Duffy is best known for writing love poems that often take the form of monologues" ("Carol Ann Duffy" 2012).

[31] "The author of eighteen volumes of poetry and nearly thirty plays, Derek Walcott is perhaps best known for his epic Omeros (1990), which uses the themes and characters of Homeric poetry to explore the past and present of the Caribbean" (Michael J. Hartwell 2019).

[32] "Regarded as one of England's foremost poets, Hill is best known for his poetry that emphasizes his religious, historical, and moral point of view, examining such themes as the impact of the past on the present, the relationship between doubt and faith, the coerciveness and corruptibility of language, and the responsibility of the poet to society" (Hunter 2008).

Likewise, the range of materials gathered together in *Perduta Gente* has its equivalent in Howe's compositions: "Howe uses archives, family documents, photograph, found text and lyric to investigate her compositional process…" ("Susan Howe" 2024) This Project has also tried to underline the way in which, as in the case of much of Howe's output, "…history is [also] for [Reading] an ongoing subconscious thread" ("Susan Howe" 2024), which is why it is a largely nightmare scenario, too ghastly to contemplate, that has been explored in this Project.

Throughout the Project, it may be affirmed that ample proof has been provided of how stylistic features of Reading's art in this docu-poem make it relevant to an understanding of how poetry and history may be said to converge in impact-laden ways in the final decades of the twentieth century. The use of a range of discourse types, both linguistic and visual, have been explored, together with the lexical-semantic and rhythmic components of those same discourse types, while emphasis has also been placed on the role of Dante's art as a fundamental intertext when coming to terms with Reading's impact-laden docu-poem. Its presence, as has been exemplified, projects the fusion between the historical and the sociocultural, on the one hand, and the prophetic, on the other.

Keeping in mind the framework provided by the phenomenon of the docu-poem as an aesthetic paradigm, the ways in which the conflation of the documentary, on the one hand, and the poetic, on the other, may be appreciated has constituted a fundamental analytical feature of this Project. Likewise, the televisual / audiovisual examples of *V* and *Xanadu* have been used as projections of the phenomenon of the docu-poem beyond its paper-bound format. It is for this reason that the author-musician / singer-songwriter, with regard to the decision to initiate the enrichment of *Perduta Gente* in musical terms, has considered it as a potential first step in the consolidation of another example of a dramatized, audiovisual cultural product characterized by the factor of impact. The relevant links to the web via *YouTube* continue to act as proof of such an initiative (see section 7.1).

Relevant in this same sense is how the musical enrichment of David Jones's *The Anathemata* (1952) has constituted a highly relevant precedent for the singer-songwriter / author of this End-of-Degree Project, being his intention to achieve a similar end; what Dilwort states as an "augment[ation of] the poem in various ways [given that the musical pieces] increase what is already the work's rich intertextuality and extend it into another art form in ways that go beyond mere musical illustration" (Dilworth 1991, 29).

What cannot be forgotten in this section involving concluding remarks is how this Project was made possible in the first place due to research carried out in the area of the field of literary criticism during the phase following the discovery of Reading's challenging docu-poem. It is

in this way that it became possible to discover the power of communication that Reading possesses as an artist and, moreover, in terms of *Perduta Gente*, as a key end-of-century voice within cultural history.

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