Fabrizio Venerandi's Electronic Poems: An Attempt to Analyze Digital Works

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Electronic Literature (e-lit) is a literary phenomenon shaped by the introduction of computers and digital means. Since its language is "code native," e-lit is an international (even global) literature; however, e-lit has quickly acquired local features, reflecting the culture, the heritage, and the language of individual countries, as all literary phenomena do.

In Italy, e-lit is a niche phenomenon related to newborn communities such as LEI (Letteratura Elettronica Italiana, "Italian Electronic Literature").[1] Despite this there are already some Italian authors, such as Fabrizio Venerandi, who are exploring the extended opportunities given by the electronic page.

In this essay I will discuss Venerandi's digital publishing projects and specifically his work *Poesie elettroniche* ("Electronic Poems") and reflect over his ability to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the electronic book within the EPUB 3 format—opportunities that are not available on paper, which is a closed and static medium. Starting from the textual analysis of one of Venerandi's poems, my purpose is, on one hand, to analyze the literary aspects of the electronic text and, on the other, to underline the importance of the supporting device where this text has been published. In fact, the Italian publishing market, in order to meet the demands of an audience with poor digital literacy, offers low-complexity e-book formats, such as PDFs, which are nothing more than the simple transposition of traditional books onto digital devices, retaining the closed and static format of the paper page. This causes a barrier between e-lit and its potential users, who are not used to works that are fluid, "open," and interactive. I will try to contextualize this situation within the Italian e-lit scenario, dwelling on video poetry as the widest spreading genre of Italian e-lit.

Fabrizio Venerandi and his *Poesie Elettroniche*

Venerandi is a writer, a publisher, and the founder—alongside Maria Cecilia Averame—of *Quintadicopertina*. The name, which literally means "fifth of the cover," is based on the fact that, in Italian, the back cover is usually referred to as "Quarta di copertina," "fourth [page] of the cover," since it is considered the fourth page of a book cover (Figure 1).
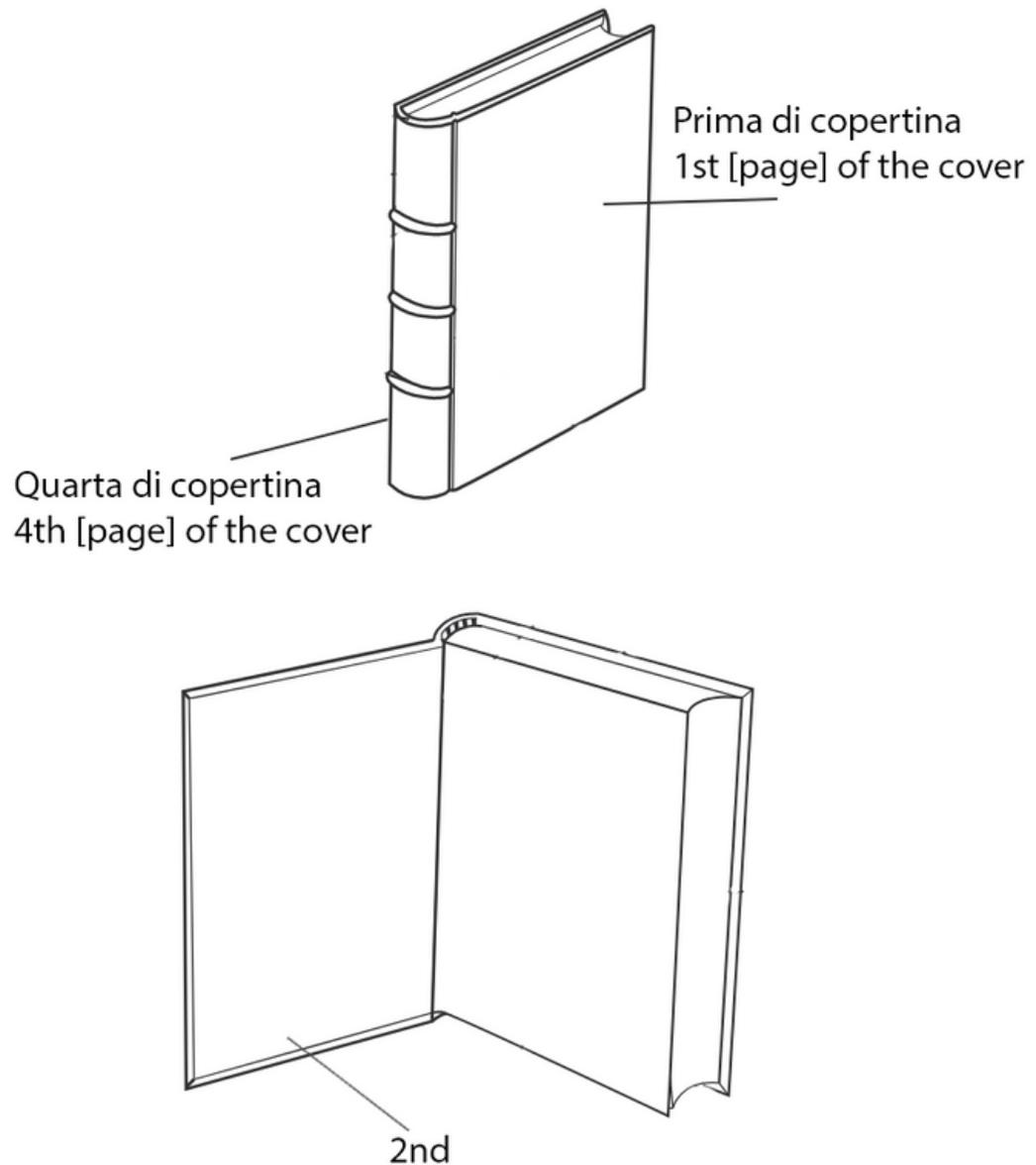
Figure 1: The anatomy of a book showing the Quarta di copertina, adapted from an image in the public domain on Wikimedia Commons

 It is clear that there is no such thing as the fifth page of a cover in a traditional paper book and *Quintadicopertina* highlights, starting from its name, the distance between this editorial project and the traditional ones, based on print. In fact, *Quintadicopertina* only publishes digital works. In 2016 Venerandi published *Poesie elettroniche* through Quintadicopertina in collaboration with the blog Nazione Indiana.

The e-book is formatted as an EPUB 3, an open-source format that allows code. The *Electronic Poems* have a preface written by philosopher Gino Roncaglia, who reflects on the connections between the work itself and more traditional visual or even electronic experiences, ranging from the fourth and third century B.C., to recent avant-garde works, and all the way to Nanni Balestrini and the first Italian e-lit work, *Tape Mark I* (published in 1961).[2]

In writing his e-book, Fabrizio Venerandi had three main goals: (1) to use code in order to find new ways of expression not conceivable on paper; (2) to move e-lit from niche websites to mainstream stores; (3) to think of code in terms of rhetoric (See "Poesie"). Starting from the title, instability is the *leitmotif* of the book. In fact, every time the reader lands on the front cover, it transforms the title from *Poesie elettroniche* to five different combinations:

> *Quindi amore ora dico* ("So, my love, now I say")
>
> *Parole messe a tacere* ("Words silenced")
>
> *Cose ke non posso dire* ("Things that I can't say")
>
> *Ogni volta per sempre* ("Each time forever")
>
> 0101010101

The numerical combination corresponds to the structure of the eBook, which is divided into four sections of 10 poems each, plus a prologue and a final appendix:

> 0 "Prologo: poesia che ho scritto, ma poi si è cancellata" ("Prologue: a poem that I wrote but then it erased itself")
>
> 10 "Poesie occluse" ("Obstructed poems")
>
> 10 "Poesie temporali" ("Time-based poems")
>
> 10 "Poesie cangianti" ("Iridescent poems")
>
> 10 "Poesie toccanti ("Touching poems")
>
> 1 "Appendice" ("Appendix")

In each section Venerandi explores the potential that a code-based writing may have, formulating what could be called a rhetoric of the code. Since the digital work is able to offer expanded opportunities for textual and expressive innovations. Venerandi is able to define, through the interaction between code and poetry, new ways of expression which allow the reader to grasp the complex mutability that lies in the contemporary world. In his article for Nazione Indiana, Venerandi writes:

> L'idea che sottende tutte le sezioni (tranne la glossa finale) è che il poeta doveva scrivere delle cose sgradevoli. È una fotografia di un momento di crisi personale. Non volevo leggere le cose che stavo scrivendo, ma le dovevo scrivere. Il codice mi ha aiutato.[3]

The first section, "Poesie occluse" ("Obstructed Poems"), contains verses that are partially covered up (Figure 2). They are interactive, as when the reader touches the lines, some words appear and others disappear. Semantic contrasts—such as presence/absence or light/dark—populate the whole section, and the cover-ups make the contrasts even more evident. Because of the covered-up parts, it's impossible to read the entire poem.

Figure 2: "Poesie Occluse" from *Poesie Elettroniche* by Fabrizio Venerandi, licensed under CC BY 4.0

 The second section is "Poesie temporali" ("Time-based Poems"), also called "Gelsomini notturni" ("Nocturne Jasmine"). This section's stanzas are usually static, but a few lines change during the night, opening up as flowers and thus creating new meanings.

"Poesie cangianti" ("Iridescent Poems") is the third section (Figure 3). The lines in this section generate endless permutations. The result is a matrix of possible poems to be read over and over. The non-linear reading drags the reader in a loop that recalls the book's *leitmotif*, instability, in which the reader can eventually get the poem's ultimate meaning.
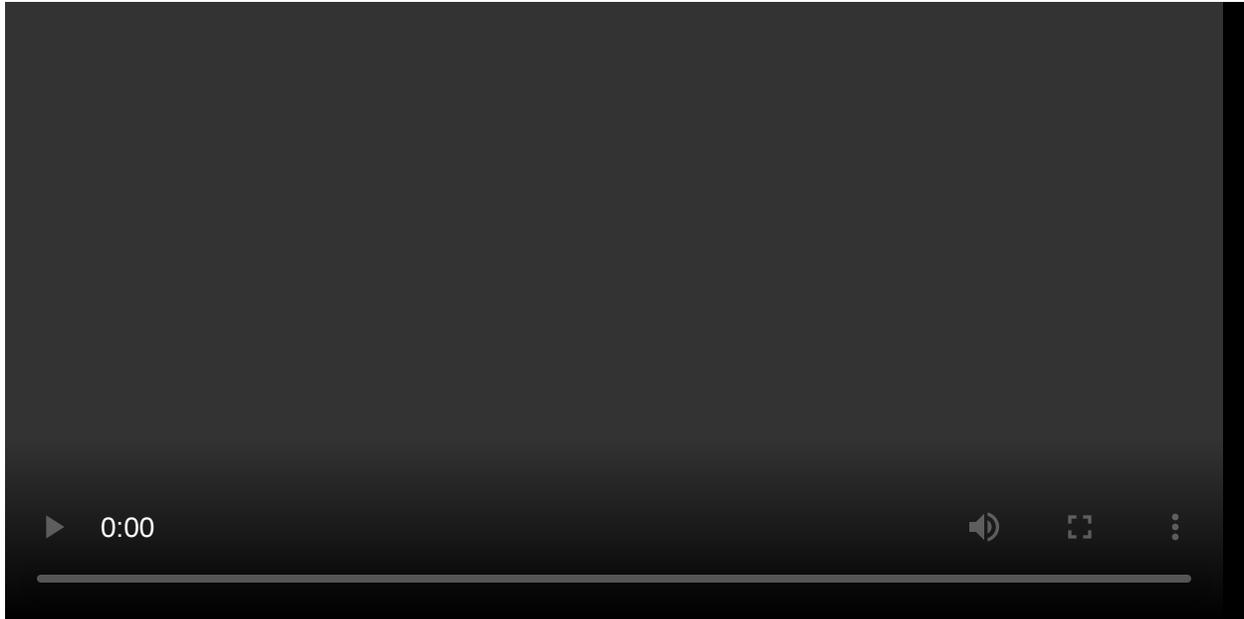
Figure 3: "Poesie Cangianti" from *Poesie Elettroniche* by Fabrizio Venerandi, licensed under CC BY 4.0

The fourth section is "Poesie toccanti" ("Touching Poems"), a collection of interactive and visual poems (Figure 4). Each stanza is composed by one core word and multiple orbiting words. Each orbiting word, when touched, generates other orbiting words. At the end, each stanza of the section turns into a genealogical tree where all the words of the same filiation are logically and spatially connected.
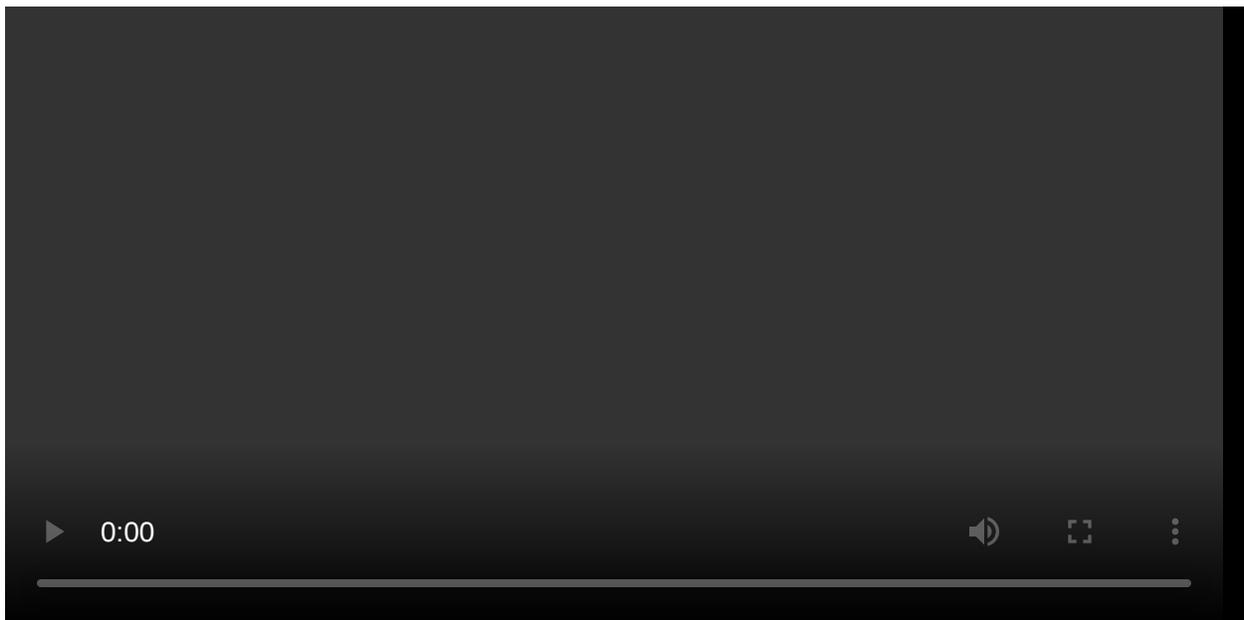

Figure 4: "Poesie Toccanti" from *Poesie Elettroniche* by Fabrizio Venerandi, licensed under CC BY 4.0

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6

The final section is made of hypertextual poems that the poet uses to state his poetics.

A second edition of *Poesie Elettroniche* has been published in the Electronic Literature Organization's *Electronic Literature Collection* (volume 4). It includes five new poems written between 2020 and 2021. The new collection ends with *Poesia che ora te la scrivo* ("Poem that I am about to write for you"), a never-ending poem generated by code (Berens et al.).

Venerandi's work is a very interesting e-lit experiment at a global level. *Poesie elettroniche* explores the potentiality of the code-based media in order to find expanded opportunities for textual and expressive innovations.

However, is it possible to analyze a text which is, by its own nature, ever-changing and therefore sometimes unintelligible?

An Attempt to Analyze Venerandi's Poems

In order to find a way to analyze Venerandi's poems, I have picked the categories of textons and scriptons from Aarseth's *Cybertext*: *Perspective on Ergodic Literature*.

For Aarseth "a text is any object with the primary function to relay verbal information" (62). To this definition Aarseth adds two observations: the fact that a text cannot be independent of some material medium, recalling McLuhan's statement "the medium is the message," and then the recognition that a text can transmit different information depending on the addressee, who, in some cases, may not understand the meaning of the text. Assuming that information is a string of signs, Aarseth distinguishes between "strings as they appear to readers and strings as they exist in the text" (62); he calls the former scriptons and the latter textons. For example, in Raymond Queneau's Oulipian work *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* (Queneau) there are 140 textons which readers can combine into 100,000 scriptons (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Raymond Queneau's Cent mille milliards de poèmes. Image by Thomas Guest, "Queneau's Sonnets," via Flickr, licenced under CC BY 2.0

The relationship between textons and scriptons is defined by a "traversal function," and that is "the mechanism by which scriptons are revealed or generated from textons and presented to the user of the text" (Aarseth 62).

Aarseth's study offers the opportunity to elaborate some issues concerning the interpretation of texts generated by the interaction between scriptons, textons, and traversal functions.[4] An analysis focused only on scriptons as they appear to the reader makes a critical discourse impossible, since the text and its meaning will be different every time it gets read. On the other hand, paying too much attention to textons loses the readers' reception and their interaction with the work. However, a strict interpretation of the traversal function circumscribes the text and the literary work to a mere mechanism.

In order to put Aarseth's categories into practice, I am going to analyze "#cinque" ("poem number five") of Venerandi's *Poesie Elettroniche* (Figure 6).

The poem—as a part of the first section titled "Poesie occluse" ("Obstructed Poems")—is partially erased by the author, who does not want to read it entirely. As Venerandi writes at the beginning of the section:

the reader can reveal an erased part by touching it. By touching another erasure, the text that was revealed gets covered up again. It is not possible to contemplate the entire poem in its nakedness. (*Poesie;* my trans.)[5]

To readers, this is what "#cinque" looks like at the beginning:

Figure 6: "#cinque" from *Poesie Elettroniche* by Fabrizio Venerandi, licensed under CC BY 4.0

[1] hidden – [2] – who I used to be, [3] who I would have been; [4] what I would have been [5] who I used to be; [6] [7]: what I used to have [8] who I would have been [9] – [10], [11] [12] [13] there has

> never been [14] [15] fluorescent.

There are fifteen textons, which correspond to the fifteen textual segments covered up, inserted into a fixed poem. These textons are:

> [1] I have always / [2] my love / [3] thinking of / [4] and I have never been / [5] to maintain / [6] now / [7] I do not know anything / [8] I have erased / [9] there is not / [10] you are not here / [11] you are like the moon / [12] in Space: 1999 / [13] that realizes / [14] the Earth – and it goes away, / [15] rediscovering itself as a planet. (*Poesie*, my trans.)[6]

Through interaction with the text, the reader can cover or uncover the fifteen textons and in doing so they may generate up to 2^{15} scriptons. Considering the short length of the textons, the 2^{15} scriptons are not 2^{15} different poems, but rather 2^{15} oscillations of the same poem. The poem does not dissolve its meaning in different poems until a loss of sense occurs, but gives the idea of something undetermined and ever-changing within the poem itself. The coexistence of multiple shades of meaning in the same text offers a more complex perspective on the author's reality—a multilayer reality—which the reader tries to rebuild by recalling the covered and uncovered verses through memory.

An oscillating motion runs through the text, and this is evident right from the beginning of the poem, where the author, in defining his identity, creates movement with a never-ending loop around the verb "to be" conjugated in different tenses and moods (past, present, future, indicative and conditional). The verb "to have" only appears once as an alternative to "to be" at the heart of the poem within the scripton "What I used to have, I have erased." Toward the end of the text there is a parenthetical clause dedicated to the beloved, introduced by the phrase "you are not here." This phrase is symmetrically placed next to the phrase "there is not," referring to the poet's identity:

> who I would have been *there is not – you are not here*, you are like the moon in Space 1999 that realizes there has never been the Earth – rediscovering itself as a planet fluorescent.

The scripton generated by skipping the parenthetical clause is the following:

> who I would have been there is not and it goes away, rediscovering itself as a planet fluorescent.

However, the reference to the moon in the parenthetical clause and the word "planet" placed right after it, create another possible combination in the reader's mind, where the subject is the beloved instead of the poet:

> you are like the moon that realizes there has never been the Earth – and it goes away, rediscovering itself as a planet fluorescent.

As a consequence, the rules of the poem are inverted but the meaning remains unstable. In fact, even if the semantic chain moon-Earth-planet ties the beloved to the verb "goes away," the grammatical subject is always

the author. So, at the end, who really goes away? The poet or the beloved?

However, another scripton, which is generated without touching the texton "the Earth – and it goes away," makes things more complicated:

> you are like the moon that realizes there has never been [the Earth – and it goes away], rediscovering itself as a planet fluorescent.

Here nobody goes away and the situation of stasis is created by another loop-structure, which is used, this time, to define the beloved's self-awareness. Only the addition of "the Earth" allows readers to unlock the situation: after realizing there has never been an Earth, they rediscover themselves as a fluorescent planet and go away.

The JavaScript code running on the first section, called *leggo.js*, defines the relationship between textons and scriptons (the traversal function) thus creating a combinatorial game that relates author and readers (Figure 7).

```
  2  '
  3  conteggio=document.getElementsByTagName('span').length;
  4  console.log(conteggio);
  5  var attivo=0;
  6
  7  for (evento=0; evento<conteggio;evento++)
  8
  9  {
 10      (function() {
 11  console.log(evento);
 12  var parola=document.getElementsByTagName('span')[evento];
 13  parola.addEventListener("touchstart", function(event) {event.preventDefault()}, false);
 14  parola.addEventListener("touchmove", function(event) {event.preventDefault()}, false);
 15  parola.addEventListener("touchend", function(event) {event.preventDefault()}, false);
 16  parola.addEventListener("touchcancel", function(event) {event.preventDefault()}, false);
 17
 18  parola.addEventListener("mouseup", function(event) {event.preventDefault()}, false);
 19  parola.addEventListener("mousedown", function(event) {event.preventDefault()}, false);
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24  parola.addEventListener("touchend", function(){
 25
 26                                  {
 27                                      normalizzo();
 28                              parola.setAttribute("class", "leggo");
 29
 30                                  }
 31
 32                              }, false);
 33
 34
 35  parola.addEventListener("mouseup", function(){
 36
 37                                  {
 38                                      normalizzo();
 39                              parola.setAttribute("class", "leggo");
 40
 41                                  }
 42
 43                              }, false);
 44
 45
 46
 47
 48  }());
 49  }
 50
 51  function normalizzo()
 52              {for (check=0; check<conteggio;check++)
 53                  {var cosa=document.getElementsByTagName('span')[check];
 54                      cosa.setAttribute("class", "intuisco");
 55                      }
 56                      }
```

Figure 7: "Touching Poems' Javascript code"
from *Poesie Elettroniche* by Fabrizio Venerandi, licensed under CC
BY 4.0

In the essay *Cybernetics and Ghosts* (1986 [1980]), Italian writer Italo Calvino reflects on the function of the combinatorial game in literature:

> We start from the particular pleasure given by any combinatorial play, and at a certain point, out of the countless combinations of words with similar sounds, one becomes charged with special significance, causing laughter. What has happened is that the juxtaposition of concepts that we have stumbled across by chance unexpectedly unleashes a preconscious idea, an idea, that is, half buried in or erased from our consciousness, or maybe only held at arm's length or pushed aside, but powerful enough to appear in the consciousness if suggested not by any intention on our part, but by an objective process. […] Literature is

> a combinatorial game that pursues the possibilities implicit in its own material, independent of the personality of the poet, but it is a game that at a certain point is invested with an unexpected meaning, a meaning that is not patent on the linguistic plane on which we were working but has slipped in from another level, activating something that on that second level is of great concern to the author or his society. (19–20)

The "unexpected meaning" arising from the combinatorial game is never definitive in Venerandi's poems. The "particular pleasure" given to the reader in making sense of the text is aleatory and is immediately followed by the frustration of not grasping the work's meaning. In fact, the instability and the oscillation of sense that go through the whole "#cinque" are pointed out in Venerandi's poetics. In the first edition's introduction, he affirms that:

> the digital rhetoric, which is present in different ways in the four sections, allows me to write what I would not have wanted to read again and fix in a form. These are poems that do not want to be finished, but believe that the thing they are talking about is still a thing in mutation. (*Poesie*)[7]

Aarseth's Categories in Hypertextual Structures and Open Works

By using Aarseth's categories in analyzing "#cinque", I have tried to use a method that could frame into a conversation a text which is, by its nature, unstable. In my opinion, distinguishing between textons and scriptons is useful to understand the several shades of meaning surrounding the poems throughout the collection, except for the final hypertextual appendix. In fact, the hypertextual structure atomizes and disperses the author's voice in multiple units and it is no coincidence that Venerandi decides to dissolve his voice in the section where "the poet talks about the nature of his poetry" (*Poesie*). An attempt to find a theoretical framework that could encompass the thirty final glosses, reducing them to shades of meaning of the same matter, might be a stretch. For this reason, this section requires a theoretical approach which takes into account open and dissipative structures.[8]

The idea of literary works as "open works" or "open encyclopedias"[9] had already emerged in the twentieth century, where authors contained in a novel an enormous mass of material. In this idea, "open" denies the etymology of the word "encyclopedia" itself—that has knowledge "closed" in a circle—but creates a more bracing analogy with hypertext, where readers "would create 'endless trails' of such links" (Landow 8).[10]

Italo Calvino, in one of his lectures written for the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard and collected in the posthumous book *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, recognizes the idea of an "open encyclopedia" in some great modern and contemporary novels.[11] Starting from Carlo Emilio Gadda—the Italian James Joyce—Calvino gathers and analyzes authors and novels that see and recreate the world as an intricate tangle of relationships. Gadda, for example:

> cannot restrain himself from following, multiplying the details so that his descriptions and digressions become infinite. Whatever the starting point, the matter in hand spreads out and out, encompassing ever vaster horizons, and if it were permitted to go on further and further in every direction, it would end by embracing the entire universe (Calvino, *Six Memos* 107).

In this gathering, Calvino also inserts novels such as Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Marcel Proust's *Recherche*, Gustave Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, and authors such as Raymond Queneau, Thomas Mann, James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Paul Valéry, and Luis Borges (along with authors from the past like Rabelais and Dostoevsky). All of them are united by the same idea of knowledge as multiplicity and, in some cases, by their inability to find an ending.

Thus, starting from the category of "open work" present in some 21st century works, hypertextual structures can be analyzed by finding some points in common with poetics that try to render the multiplicity through encyclopedic structures able to represent the complexity, instead of the "Truth," of the world.

E-Lit and Digitalization in Italy

Even though e-lit is not popular or much known in Italy yet, there are already some poetry festivals and contests that dedicate whole sections to video poetry alongside more traditional categories such as dialectic poetry and poems for children. For example, *Punta della lingua* ("Tip of the Tongue") is a quite famous festival dedicated to all forms of poetry, including video poetry. It even inspired *Poesia che si vede* ("Poetry That You Can See"), a newer poetry festival entirely dedicated to video poetry, held for the first time in summer 2021.

Finding electronic works as festival categories is a sign of interest from the literary environment. On the other hand, it must not surprise us that the first Italian approach to e-lit has started from video poetry, a category that does not totally embrace the potentiality of the new media. In fact it is not interactive, and even though it might feature non-linear narration, it always has a beginning and an end. In other words, video poetry doesn't question the boundaries between author, reader, and work and its fruition is absolutely linear. In my opinion, all of these are crucial elements when trying to understand the e-lit spread in Italy and, on closer inspection, all of them are related to the low level of digital literacy in Italian society.

In fact, according to the last *Digital Economy and Society Index* (DESI 2021), Italy's ranking is quite low.

The first chart shows the situation in terms of digital public services (yellow), integration of digital technology (green), connectivity (blue) and human capital (orange). The second focusses on the situation in terms of human capital—the set of habits, knowledge and attributes that can produce economic value—and Italy has one of the worst scores.
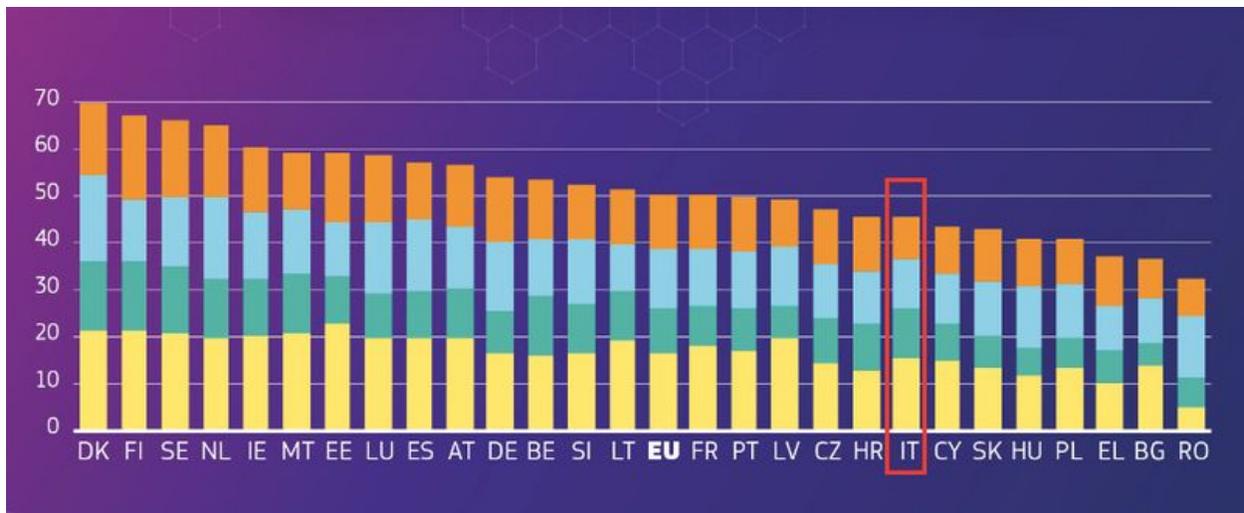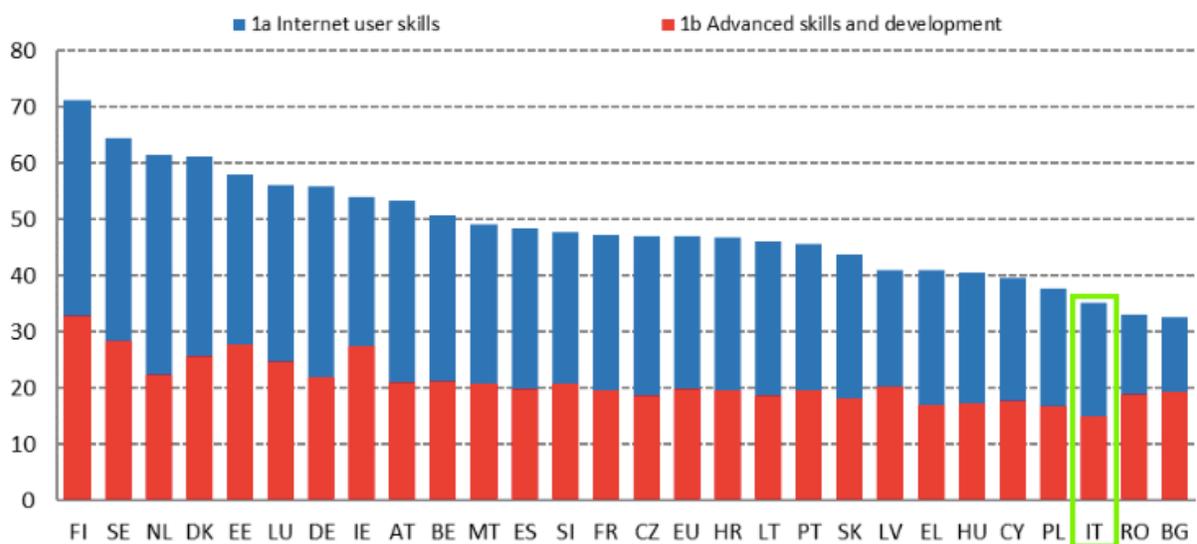
Figure 8: Digital Economy and Society Index 2021, adapted from *DESI 2021* by the European Commission, licensed under CC BY 4.0

Figure 9: Human capital dimension (Score 0–100), 2021, adapted from *Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2021: Human Capital* by the European Commission, p. 4, licensed under CC BY 4.0

For this reason, video poems, as works that do not drastically change the way of fruition as they keep the categories of author, reader, and work with a beginning and an end, are the most widespread e-lit works in Italy and Italian artists such as Caterina Davino, Roberto Gilli, and Fabrizio Venerandi are almost unknown outside of a niche.

In any case many e-lit experiments are isolated and sporadic in Italy, and it is not possible to talk about an Italian e-lit literary tradition yet.

Even if Italian e-lit has a "father," Nanni Balestrini (1935-2019) with his work *Tape Mark I* published in 1961, considering him an e-lit author would be a stretch, since he only occasionally returned to this kind of experimentations within his wide literary production.[12]

However, it is possible to observe some overlaps between contemporary e-lit Italian authors and the generation of Italian neo-avant-garde poets—which includes Balestrini as well—that worked in Italy in the second half of the twentieth century. These poets belonged to "Gruppo 63" and "Gruppo 70," which were two literary movements that shared the same critical attitude towards the literary tradition and its linguistic and formal structures. While Gruppo 63's approach was mainly *intramedial* and focused on plurilingualism and formal experimentation, Gruppo 70 "had a broader *intermedial* understanding of language as a transmedial appropriation of modalities and qualifying aspects from other media" (Patti, *Opera Aperta* 16-17).[13]

The contemporary e-lit experiments in Italy, including those of Venerandi, share the same need to experiment with new languages and forms, through the conquest of an unexplored literary space offered by new technologies. Therefore, e-lit Italian works fall within a broader context of artistic experimentation which contaminates different languages by hybridizing them. It is undoubtedly a complex and jagged scenario, the analysis of which is impossible to develop within this essay.

Conclusions

In this essay I have tried to analyze, through the lenses of literary criticism, one of the poems in Venerandi's *Poesie elettroniche*, which is a work that I consider relevant because of his ability to rhetorically use the computer code, taking up challenges that traditional literature cannot. Literary criticism permits me to go deep into literary texts, discovering its meaning and not only the technological and mechanical experimentation underneath them. My purpose is to carry on a poetic discourse around e-lit alongside the currently existing studies, that focus on the issues of e-lit history and themes, and the definition of e-lit genres and their taxonomy.

An in-depth knowledge of electronic texts and their expressive instances allows us, on one hand, to relate e-lit to the literary tradition and, on the other, to have greater awareness of why some works are received by the public better than others.

For this reason, I believe that literary criticism should redefine its tools and adapt them to the interpretive challenges posed by digital texts.

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Footnotes

1. LEI was founded in 2021 by a group of electronic Italian artists who, among various purposes, "do not stop wondering what it means to write of literary criticism, what it means to be a writer today, what it is possible to do with tools never had before, what e-lit was, is and will be" (Lettere E Infezioni) LEI stands for Letteratura Elettronica Italiana which is the name of the Facebook page – the place where this quote was taken from (https://m.facebook.com/LEIcollettivo/about). ↩

2. *Tape Mark I* was published in *Almanacco Bompiani 1962*, a collection of the main facts and events happened in 1961 in the Italian literary and artistic scenario. Balestrini's work is computer poetry (Patti, *Opera Aperta* 96) where a set of programming instructions generates the text. ↩

3. "The idea behind all the sections (Appendix excluded) is that the poet needs to write unpleasant things. The book is a picture of a moment of crisis: I did not want to read what I was writing, but I needed to write. The code was helpful in doing so." ("Poesie," my trans.). ↩

4. Alongside Aarseth's categories, I will point out Philip Bootz's more recent "procedural model," which is a "pragmatic alternative model of the digital work[…]" (4). Bootz argues that Aarseth's cybertext model cannot account for certain properties of real digital works because "[t]he cybertext model says nothing about the actual technical nature of the traversal function, nor about the actual physical dispositive in which is embedded" (3). In other words, Aarseth's model does not consider the digital texts' lability. Moreover, according to Bootz, the cybertext model is implicitly based only on the reader's point of view. However, Aarseth's model, despite its limitations, allows an early stage of analysis to be reached without a deep knowledge of coding. ↩

5. My translation of the first section's introduction: "Questa sezione contiene poesie che il poeta ha cancellato, parzialmente, per non essere costretto a rileggerne il testo. Toccando è possibile per il lettore scoprire una parte cancellata. Toccando una successiva cancellazione, però, la prima tornerà a essere illeggibile. Non è possibile contemplare la poesia nella sua nudità." (Venerandi, *Poesie*) ↩

6. My translation of the following syntagm: [1] ho sempre / [2] amore / [3] pensando a /[4] e non sono mai stato / [5] per mantenere / [6] adesso / [7] non so niente / [8] l'ho cancellato / [9] non c'è / [10] tu non ci sei / [11] sei come la luna di / [12] spazio 1999 / [13] che si accorge che / [14] la terra – e se ne va /[15] riscoprendosi pianeta. (*Poesie*) ↩

7. My translation of an excerpt from the preface: "La retorica digitale che sottende — in maniera diversa — tutte le quattro sezioni del testo è quella di permettermi di scrivere cose che non avrei voluto rileggere. Che non avrei voluto fermare in una forma. Queste sono poesie che non vogliono essere finite, ma che credono che la cosa di cui parlano sia ancora una cosa in mutazione" (*Poesie).* ↩

8. In using the word "open" I am referring to Umberto Eco's *The Open Work* published in 1962, which is a semiotic solution to the analysis of poetics of works linked by the concept of "openness." ↩

9. In a letter to Carlo Linati on September 21st 1920, James Joyce defined his *Ulysses* as "a kind of encyclopedia[.]" Indeed, *Ulysses*, as well as his own *Finnegans Wake*, are networks of links between characters, events, and things existing even outside of the works. ↩

10. During the seventeenth century, Baroque culture had an analogous perception of scattered knowledge and a similar interest for decentralized knowledge, attitudes mostly due to the crisis of the Aristotelian paradigm. Nevertheless, Baroque culture made the effort of comparing multiplicity to unity, *omnis in uno*, trying to gather scattered elements in one point (just think of Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *Fontana dei quattro fiumi* [*Fountain of the Four Rivers*] in Rome). ↩

11. Calvino finished writing five out of six lectures, "The six memos," about contemporary literature (*Lightness*, *Quickness*, *Exactitude, Visibility,* and *Multiplicity*) by September 1985. He planned to write the last one, *Consistency*, in Cambridge. The lecture taken into account above is *Multiplicity*. ↩

12. Balestrini wrote two other forerunner e-lit works: the generative novel *Tristano* (1966 and republished in 2007) and the combinatory experiment *Epreuves d'écriture* (1985). ↩

13. In *Opera Aperta: Italian Electronic Literature from 1960s to the Present*, Emanuela Patti underlines the points of contact between the neo-avant-garde movement and the contemporary e-lit Italian scenario. ↩