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Bergh, C. van den; Reverseau, A.; Bonciarelli, S.

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Introduction: Positions and Roles of Literary “Documents”: Textual Games and the Creation of Hybrids

Sarah Bonciarelli, Anne Reverseau and Carmen Van den Bergh

1 Preliminary Remarks

The analysis of the relationship between Literature and the notion of “Document” (cfr. §2 for a more elaborate definition) was the starting point of a wide-ranging research project departing from this precise interaction. The first steps were taken in December 2012 with an international conference, accompanied by an exhibition, from which a number of peer reviewed articles and a French-language volume (*La Licorne*, September 2014) originated. Finally, this study in English embodies the last stage and the final reflection of this five-year research project.

The Conference *Literature as Document. Generic Boundaries in Western Literature of the Thirties* was held at The University KU Leuven (5-6-7 December 2012) in close collaboration with the research group MDRN,¹ with the objective to start collecting ideas, new insights and tackle some case studies aiming at stimulating a debate among experts in the field.

In parallel with the conference the exhibition *Literature as Document. Visual Culture of the 1930s. European literature in the 1930s* was set up in order to expose and organize the material analyzed in the context of the conference and make it accessible to a broader public. The exhibition zoomed in on about a hundred texts and objects – commented on by specialists of the period, showing the huge variety of documents that inspired writers at the time. Visitors of the exhibition had the possibility to dive in the different modalities of illustration and insertion of documents in British, Belgian and

1 MDRN is a think tank on Literary modernism(s) based at the University of Leuven in Belgium. MDRN studies the literature of a key period in European cultural history: the first half of the twentieth century. All MDRN research initiatives share a double aim. On the one hand they wish to add to our understanding of European writing from the first half of the twentieth century, highlighting its ever-shifting conceptions, functions and complex medial make-up. On the other hand MDRN research more generally seeks to reflect on the practice of modern literary historiography. (www.mdrn.be)

Dutch literature, the documentary narrative and French, Italian and German journalism, the appropriation of an advertising aesthetic. A selection of the exposed material has been reworked and later settled in an online catalogue available on the exhibition platform in two languages <http://www.litteraturesmodesemploi.org/>.

A third phase of the research involved the publication of two articles, one in Dutch (*Romaneske* 2013)² and one in Italian (*Arabeschi* 2014)³ and the creation of a virtual gallery where texts are not only presented and interpreted, but also displayed and visualized (www.arabeschi.it).⁴ The theoretical approach and the analysis of case studies developed during the conference came to a final stage with the publication of two volumes. The first one was published in as a special issue of the journal *La Licorne*, entitled *Littérature et document autour de 1930. Hétérogénéité et hybridation générique*.⁵

It seemed appropriate to close this research project with an English-language volume entitled *Literature as Document. Generic Boundaries in 1930s Western Literature*, in order to sum up the gained insights and to highlight some important aspects emerged in all previous stages of the work done. What originally began as a set of research questions, has thus become a more stable and lasting project.

2 Documents, Texts, Hybrids

This volume considers the relationship between documents and literary texts. More specifically, it deals with the notion of the “document” and its multifaceted and complex connections to literary “texts” and attempts to provide answers to the problematic nature of that relationship. In an effort to determine a possible theoretical definition, many different disciplines have been taken into account, as well as individual case studies. In order to observe dynamics and

2 Carmen Van den Bergh, Sarah Bonciarelli, Anne Reverseau (2013). “Literatuur als Document: de visuele cultuur van de jaren dertig”. *Romaneske*, 1 (38), 16–19.

3 Sarah Bonciarelli, Anne Reverseau, Carmen Van den Bergh (2014). “La ricerca in vetrina: riflessioni su un “esposizione”. *Arabeschi*, 3, 89–96.

4 Sarah Bonciarelli, Anne Reverseau, Carmen Van den Bergh (2014). “Testi da leggere, testi da guardare: i discorsi della letteratura attraverso le immagini negli anni Trenta”. *Arabeschi*, 3, 147–159.

5 Anne Reverseau, Carmen Van den Bergh, Sarah Bonciarelli (2014). “Sélection de lectures sur la notion de document”. In *Id.* bookseries: *La Licorne*, vol: 109, *Littérature et document autour de 1930. Hétérogénéité et hybridation générique.*, (247–256). Poitiers: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.

trends, the idea for this investigation was to look at literature, taking its practices, its factual-looking and concrete applications, as a point of departure – that is to say, then, starting from the literary object itself. By doing so, a strict delimitation of the field of methodological approaches has been avoided.

By studying the various links between the notion of the “documentary” and the “literary”, it will be easier to see how an intermixture of literary genres – we could call it “hybridisation” – can arise from this encounter, as the result of a process of constant and continuous evolution and mutual influence. The contamination between different genres, between *high-* and *lowbrow*, between centre and periphery, between the literary and the extra-literary, between the canon and its margins creates new forms and new hybrids. By incorporating literary elements as well as fragments of reality, the texts themselves eventually become constitutive of reality.

Speaking of “hybrids” means going beyond dualistic oppositions and comparisons between different extremes of the same continuum or axis, with literary texts located on one end and documents on the other. Yet it also means taking into account what is at the centre of this imaginary line: a grey area that combines multiple genres, multiple styles, multiple forms. When different genres meet, somehow different kinds of texts may derive from this encounter. And these may simultaneously have a variety of goals: texts that inform, that tell stories, that entertain, or that represent a reality, and so forth. Not always does any one of these functions prevail; and when one function prevails, it is not said that it was made up intentionally to do so. We could think that those texts defined as “documentary” may primarily aim to inform; at the same time, though, they tell a story, entertain and experience unique forms of encounter with other extra-literary features, artistic techniques, experimental languages.

This book therefore aims to investigate the role played by the “document” in creating heterogeneity in literature. This process of creation implies a heterogeneity in genres, for which the exploration at hand gives multiple examples. Some case studies provide classic examples, crucial parts of the history of literature, while others are situated more on the outskirts, though they are on that account no less rich in theoretical insights, methodologies and applications.

3 Defining the “Document”

Speaking about the notion of the “document” immediately implies a distinction between what we can define as the idea of the document – from which derives the idea of documentary – and the object, the “document” itself. Between these two notions a large spectrum of meaning can be found. The “document

as an object”⁶ indicates a fragment of reality (an image, a sound, a written text) that can be quoted and inserted in the (literary) text.⁷ It is strictly defined by its informative function, and by its status of attesting to reality. Even so, literature is not only a mediatic structure that is able to open itself to all kinds of documents. By inserting documentary elements, or by being reused in other texts, literature may also be seen as a document itself, and perhaps even as a part of historical evidence.⁸

In contrast, we can define the document as object by opposing it to fiction, to imagination, to literature. In the long history of the concept of “document” there has always been this dialogue, contraposition and duality. Everything can become and can be considered a document. It depends on the way we look at it.

Looking at the history of the theoretical discussion concerning the insertion of documents, pieces of reality and frames in literary texts, we can refer to the well-established theory of Antoine Compagnon. In his work *La seconde main ou le travail de la citation*,⁹ Compagnon defines the quote as a way to insert other materials, literary or not, in a text. Quotation is found to be “the most powerful postmodern figure”. For Compagnon, “to quote” means to select contents and extract them from a context with the intention of contextualizing them again in a literary text. This process is what happens when documents are inserted in literary texts. The insertion of those documentary elements creates an intentional relation with the new context. The result, as Compagnon says, is an intertext, based on the conscious use of language, constituting a unique moment created by the “quoting” and the “quoted” text. The meaning of the final text is the result of the type of relation that is created between the different parts. This “intertext”, defined by Viktor Skhlovsky as “raw material”, can be considered as parts of the world that irrupt into the literary text modifying the nature, even the narrative nature, of those texts. Skhlovsky argues that there is no need to think in dualistic terms, such as fiction versus non-fiction, or realism versus modernism. He emphasizes the intensive engagement of Soviet

6 For further information on the importance of objects in literary history see Nadja Cohen, Anne Reverseau (eds.), *Petit musée d'histoire littéraire. 1900–1950*, Bruxelles, Les impressions nouvelles, 2015.

7 The interest in the so-called “materiality turn” (spaces, artefacts, objects, instruments, technologies and their influence on practices, organization and social structures) has been raised among others by Buno Latour in “Can we get our materialism back, please?” in *Isis* 98 (1), 138–142.

8 For a deeper understanding of this topic see Maurizio Ferraris, *Documentalità. Perché è necessario lasciar tracce*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2009.

9 Antoine Compagnon, *La seconde main ou le travail de la citation* (Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1979).

art with new “raw material” instead, for that encounter ostensibly supports Soviet art in both its aesthetic character and its social function. We could say, then, that the presence of “raw material” in the literary text has several well-substantiated influences.

From a formal point of view, the insertion of this kind of “raw material” changes the literary style. It also changes the literary contents by inserting in “highbrow” texts elements coming from more “lowbrow” social contexts or, in general, from an extra-artistic or non-artistic context. In *Telling the truth. The Theory and practice of documentary fiction*,¹⁰ Foley underlines how the documentary value of the raw material can change, depending on: i) the frame, that is, something that has to be activated in order to produce coherence, which may sometimes give an idea of a totality, connecting real or realistic documents and their implications; ii) referential elements, also called markers or categories, which constitute a natural catalogue with elements derived from reality and used by the author to have ideas and inspirations; iii) exemplarity, comprising the exemplary and documentary value of the raw material; and iv) breaking power, which demonstrates that the document can also be an element that interferes with the reading process, working as an external and non-literary mechanism and breaking into the literary text. Foley further argues that the documentary novel constitutes a distinct fictional type, a third category in addition to fiction and non-fiction. This third type is located near the border between factual discourse and fictive discourse; it does not, however, propose an eradication of that border. Rather, it purports to represent reality by means of agreed-upon conventions of fictionality, while grafting onto its fictive past some kind of additional claim to empirical validity.

Speaking in semiotic terms, the concept of “quotation” explained by Compagnon or, more generally, the concept of embedding texts into other texts – such as those we are interested in, namely, the “documentary” ones – can be framed, moreover, in the set of reflections made by Gerard Genette in *Palimpsestes. La Littérature au second degré*.¹¹ Theorizing on the concept of “intertextuality” in this work, Genette also speaks of an intertext. Doing so, he refers to the various relationships that can occur between texts, quotations, insertions and mimesis of all kinds.

In all these theories the function of the different components in a text are emphasized, and particular importance is given to the way these sometimes very heterogeneous elements form an entirely new entity. In addition to the

10 Barbara Foley, *Telling the truth. The theory and practice of documentary fiction* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986).

11 Gerard Genette, *Palimpsestes. La Littérature au second degré* (Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1982).

text itself, it is also important to keep in mind the point of view of the beholder, of those who read and those who benefit from this text. A document in fact is never a document in and of itself, but becomes one thanks to the point of view of someone else. Jean-Pierre Colleyn supports this phenomenological perspective in *Carnets du Bal* and quotes, among others, Jean Vigo: “un documentaire, c’est un point de vue documenté sur une question”.¹² The document is not “un statut” but a “regard documentaire”. After all, the concept of “usage” (use and utility) proves important: the document is an object that will circulate in different ways and forms. In regard of such usage, the purpose of this volume is as much to reflect on literature and document as genres and institutional practices as it is to analyse different possible definitions and variants of the relationships between the literary and the documentary as modes or styles of writing.

As for what we can consider to be documentary writing, William Stott gives a very effective definition in *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*:

When we speak of documentary writing, we mean three things: writing based upon or incorporating documents; writing that records the experience of common people, often in their own words; or first-hand reportage that tries to convey the texture of actuality as well as the facts. These kinds of writing are not mutually exclusive.¹³

The definition given here by Stott – interesting also for European literatures, as the course of this volume will show – will help us understand how documentary writing is able to construct semantic categories in which different literary experiences can be inserted, even when thinking about those categories as nevertheless fluid concepts.

Tyrus Miller¹⁴ argues that terms such as “documentary” and “modernism” originate from distinct art-historical, literary and aesthetic domains. As he maintains, they seem to indicate opposed sets of beliefs about the nature of artistic communication. Though at the beginning of the twentieth century both terms are often used in tandem, it is not uncommon for them to seem completely opposed in terms of the function and nature of their artistic communication. Such dualistic thinking is rather problematic, though, even if it seems plausible, for a clear-cut distinction cannot be made, either in theory or

12 See J.-P. Colleyn, “La fiction dans le cinéma documentaire: Tentation ou hantise?”, in *Carnets du Bal*, n° 1, *L’Image-document entre réalité et fiction*, J.-P. Criqui ed. (Paris, 2010), 153.

13 William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1973), 143.

14 In *Documentary / Modernism: Convergence and Complementarity in the 1930s*, 225–241.

in practice. Miller recalls Roman Jakobson’s terminological scruples concerning his theory on multiple senses of ‘realism’ and his inference on the fact that “those who speak of artistic realism continually sin against it”.¹⁵ Rather, in the conceptual frameworks taking shape around both modernism and the documentary, Miller suggests that formally innovative experimentalism and naturalistic explorations of everyday life were not so much opposed as they were complementary moments of a broader modernist poetics.

By studying a number of literary works, this underlying coherence becomes clearer. Even if such works or artists were not labelled as “documentary”, they exhibited traits, characteristics, and interests in the very themes and features mentioned above. For that reason this volume has foregrounded many contributions relating case studies, which thus tackle the impact of documents and the documentary on different literary genres. The next section explains how we have intended to reduce the multiplicity of standpoints (by using a synchronous point of convergence), thereby hoping to ensure coherence in our discourse. To reduce even more the number of ramifications when speaking of a “documentary mode”, we could say that each of the contributions to this volume intended to answer (at least) one of the following questions: i) When and why is a text considered a document? ii) Which kinds of documents are mainly used in literary texts, and how are they inserted? iii) How can a document be used as an impetus for literary creation? What is the impact of these documents on style and genre?

4 Speaking about Western Literature: Why the 1930s?

The notion of the document and the documentary became ubiquitous in all European literatures and countries but, as we have said, their mapping has often been reduced to the hybridization of literature and reportage, of art and journalism. With this book we aim to go one step further by looking at the wider range of what can be called “Western literature”. The emblematic case of Dos Passos’ *Manhattan Transfer*, which acted as a model for many European works in the years that followed, allows us to point our gaze outside Europe and incorporate reflections on the American model as well. Our approach takes into account the hybridisation of genres and cultures, because it seems impossible to us to speak of literature in the 1930s without taking into account

15 Roman Jakobson, “On realism in art”, in *Language and Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1987), 19–27.

the interchange, borrowing and influences of various kinds, in which various countries and their literatures have played a key role.

The strategy of the book is twofold: on the one hand, an account of the interchange between literature and document can be demonstrated in different countries and Western cultures by bringing together several contributions from different literary traditions (ranging from American, Italian, French, Russian, Spanish, German and Portuguese examples). Since comparing literature to the main documentary genres, such as journalism and reportage, would be too reductive and unilateral, various other genres and types of literature have been taken into account, with particular attention paid to hybridisation. The goal is to study the creation and construction of new hybrids that make the document a literary type of creation. Altogether, the purpose of the volume is to focus on specific, as yet unexplored aspects in the relationship between documents and literature, as well as to concentrate on the impact of this use of documents and the documentary on different literary genres, in different countries, in this very specific historical period.

The vastness of the subject has led us to look for a point of view, a magnifying glass, from which to observe this phenomenon of interchange between literature and document. We therefore attempted to concentrate our focus of research as much as possible on a very specific historical moment, the ten years from 1925 to 1935, with the year 1930 at its centre.

1930 stands out as a pivotal turning point in the history of relations between literature and documentarism. It is also at this time that echoes between Russian, American and European documentary tendencies are most visible, due to influential personalities (such as Walker Evans, Berenice Abbott, Alfred Stieglitz, Dziga Vertov, Sergej Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin). It is indeed in the interwar period that the term “documentary” becomes prevalent, particularly in reference to “photography” and “film”. It is certainly no coincidence that precisely in 1930 the essay “Crisis of the novel” was published, as testimony to the challenges presented by the “New Objectivity”. This famous text by Walter Benjamin deals with film as a literary model, as embodied in the filmic technique of montage.

The Twenties and Thirties were the Golden Age of the illustrated press as well: all across Europe, authors expressed a strong interest in reproduction techniques and typography. Newspapers and magazines (sites of concrete encounters between text and image, and between different backgrounds and statuses) provided for a visible convergence of various manifestations of generic hybridisation around 1930. The press started to assume an important function in terms of disseminating and internationalizing artistic and literary debates by documenting and promoting them. These far-reaching interests are evident

in the composition of visual works, for instance, in which authors combined literature with music, pictures, newsreels, and so on. In magazines such as *Arts et métiers graphiques*,¹⁶ they highlighted and combined cultural and typographical novelties. “Our culture has become visual”, Carlo Rim declared in 1930.¹⁷ In fact, the profusion of images in reviews, magazines and advertisements, as well as in popular editions or serialisations, contributed to the creation of a mass culture that was above all visual.¹⁸

Yet the documentary aesthetic of this specific period is not limited only to the visual arts: it is also claimed for works of literature and of writing in general. Indeed, the period 1925–1935 again witnessed the flourishing of debates from the previous century on issues of realistic representation, objectivity, sources and archives. Yet this era responded in a very different way in its search for establishing new realistic modes of writing, in the relationship of art to reality. Furthermore, as the “Roaring Twenties” were replaced by darker years, literature became a document of the period. With the Great Depression, writers tried to bear witness to the economic crisis that was quickly becoming political, for instance. This role was particularly crucial in the USA, inevitably affecting the entire “Continent”, with Germany, Russia and Italy in the vanguard.

Literature has always used and inserted fragments from the real world, whether they are visual or textual. At the end of the Twenties, this documentary impulse made a fresh start, simultaneously in different countries, with the search for a new realism and the publication of some important bestsellers that would enter literary history as cornerstones of modernism. In Italy *Gli indifferenti* (1929) of Alberto Moravia marked the search for new narrative prose that would eventually be seen as the starting point of the neo-realist movement that exploded in the mid-Forties; Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) enjoyed worldwide renown as a major example of modernism in the form of the German *Großstadtroman*; the Anglo-Saxon cinematic novel by Woolf, Joyce and Dos Passos¹⁹ likewise inspired many authors and demonstrated a

16 For recent studies on *Arts et métiers graphiques*, see the volume Kristof Van Gansen, ed. *Arts et métiers graphiques. Kunst en grafische vormgeving in het interbellum*. Leuven, Peeters, 2015; and ID., “Bold German graphic design”: *Arts et métiers graphiques* and New Typography. *Invisible Culture* 23, 201. Online: <http://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/newtypography/>

17 Carlo Rim, *Jazz* n°13, 15 janvier 1930, 556.

18 Examples from popular culture include Italian periodicals such as *Il Secolo illustrato*, *Grandi Firme*, French ones such as *L’Illustration*, *Vu* and *Le Crapouillot*, the German *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* and the American *LIFE*. Images also play an important role in more artistic and literary publications, such as *Wendingen* in the Netherlands, *Variétés* in Belgium, *io* in the Netherlands or *Occidente* in Italy.

19 Barbara Foley defines Dos Passos and the entire *U.S.A. Trilogy* as an example of Radical Modernism (Foley 1986).

model of how to use cinematographic techniques and how to experiment with non-literary elements.

This reconsideration of the novel led to a new realistic form of prose: writers showed enthusiasm for recording reality and wanted to “renew” society (whether under the influence of the new media; out of interest in industrial inventions and revolutionary innovations in transportation; or from fascination for new horizons, as characterized by the rise of tourism and the vogue for the world tour; and so on). On the other hand, the avant-gardists continued to experiment in modernist prose, poetry and drama by means of insertion and documentary collage, which completely changed the status of the literary text. Around 1930 collage techniques and, more generally, all hybridisation processes were not shocking or radical any more. As a way of writing, they formed part of the system for all Western literatures. And all this led to a “contamination” of genres, including the traditional ones (prose, poetry, drama), as well as the creation of new and mixed genres.

Finally, focusing on the years around 1930 has allowed us to study very specific literary phenomena within a synchronic approach and, at the same time, to extend it to various Western literatures, and to advance a comparative approach for understanding cultural differences and (inter)national traditions more fully.

5 Volume Presentation

We have seen in the previous pages how the concept of “document” can touch upon all kinds of genres, how it can question them and create instability, but how it can also stimulate literary invention, hybridisation and amalgamation. With this volume we have tried to provide answers to the problematic nature of the relationship between literature and documents, taking into account many different disciplines, before even trying to establish a possible definition, or many definitions, thereby delimiting the field of theoretical approaches. The idea, again, has been to look at literature starting from its practices, its factual aspects, in order to observe its dynamics and trends, rather than trying to stake theoretical boundaries from the outset.

In particular, the selection of essays comprising this special issue takes into account those aspects central to the hybridisation of genres provoked by the admixture of literary ambition, documental value and visual aspects of the documents. Several lines of such hybridisation, namely, will be traced from a comparative perspective by including transnational aspects of the texts and by providing iconographic elements and examples. The volume thus includes

papers that are dedicated both to foundational works as well as to famous and emblematic case studies focused on the relationship between literature and document (always useful when dealing with such a complex subject); and, in contrast, very new, almost niche studies that intend to address lesser-known subjects and virtually unexamined authors and texts.

The volume begins with the section *Sketching the document*, which offers a somewhat theoretical and contextual overview. Analysing the relations between the notion of “document” and that of “monument”, the contribution of Remo Ceserani leads this portion with a survey of the theoretical concepts. The theoretical debate about literature as a monument is an important one. Given that literature can be seen as a monument that remains, documents, on the other hand, are forgotten and as fleeting as, say, the newspapers that contain them. That contrast, however, may well derive primarily from the fact that literature can have no other function than itself. In the opposition between document and monument, the document is in fact on the side of the ephemeral and the discontinuous. Next, the essay of Gunther Martens and Thijs Festjens explores new theoretical approaches concerning the relation between literature and (historical) reference, as well as the hybridisation of fact and fiction. In view of these discussions, their essay reassesses the documentary aspects of a number of authors and texts that have, for divergent reasons, been considered as hallmarks of “Neue Sachlichkeit”: Egon Erwin Kisch’s *Der rasende Reporter* (1924), Erich Kästner’s *Fabian* (1931), Irmgard Keun’s *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (1932), and the consecutive re-editions of Ernst Jünger’s *In Stahlgewittern* (1920, 1924, 1934).

The volume gets to the heart of the matter with the section *Revisiting the cornerstones*. This segment takes as its point of departure those important works that have been entered into literary history. In this section various relationships between document and literature are revisited and studied from different, original and innovative angles. The section opens with Antonio Bibbò’s article, which focuses on *Manhattan Transfer* by Dos Passos. While taking into consideration its use of “real” documents (newspapers, films, and so forth) in the narrative text, this essay also explores its uncommonly created cast of characters. With “Documenting Berlin: War Neurosis and Inflation in Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz*”, Stijn De Cauwer and Sven Fabré enrich this book with another famous case study. In it, they offer new evidence for how insertions and experimental grafts come from external reality, enter the literary text of the novel and then change it, even narratively. French literature concludes this part with the contribution from Nadja Cohen, “Building up a ‘Glasshouse’ in *Nadja*: Documenting the Surrealist Way of Life”. She devotes this essay to the special relationship established by Breton with his reader in

the development of the novel *Nadja*. Cohen speaks about the way the presence of documents in the literary text – of what she calls “raw material” – requires active reading on the part of the reader. Breton’s case makes evident the importance of collaboration requested of the reader in the reading experience.

The third section is called *Experimental writings* and presents first Achille Castaldo’s study dedicated to the work *Metamorfosi* written by Dino Terra. This contribution investigates the profoundly ambiguous use the author makes of the insertion of documents within his novel. The section in general intends to elucidate how literature opens itself to insertions of the real, the urban and the everyday in modern life along the same lines, but with a more specific focus on the interchange between genres and media. Thus, the investigation contributed by Piet Devos and Gys-Walt Van Egdome, “Tardy Presents: Embodied Agency in the ‘Documental’ Poetry of Benjamin Péret and Antonio Porchia”, explores the transformation of poetry into a document of the “desiring body”. A transformation of this sort interconnects the historical avant-gardes with other kinds of experimental literature throughout the twentieth century. The paper, then, takes on different poetic views on this documentation of the body, by juxtaposing the case of the French surrealist Benjamin Péret, who celebrated the desiring “flesh” as the driving force of his “écriture automatique”, with that of the Argentinean Antonio Porchia who, by way of Eastern philosophy, employed poetry to eliminate desire.

The last section, *Generic transfers*, introduces the reader to the hybridisation of genres, starting with Robin Vogelzang’s article that explores the world of radio during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) both as a part of home and street life and as a form of literary document. Fabio Andreazza’s paper sheds light on the “documentary” aspects in Umberto Barbaro’s literary and cinematographic practice, discussing the intersection between literature and cinema. Toni Marino’s contribution closes the section on Massimo Bontempelli’s novel *Racconto di una giornata* (1932) and on Pietro Maria Bardi’s novel *La strada e il volante* (1936), written to promote the car model Fiat 1500. In both cases, the novels translate the technical information related to the car model into narrative forms, leaving traces of documentary sources and establishing a strong connection between literature and advertising.