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Syntax and Style in Alberto Arbasino's Early Works (1957-1963)

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
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Abstract

This thesis examines the syntax of the sentence and the style of three of Alberto Arbasino's early works: *Le piccole vacanze* (1957), *Il ragazzo perduto* (1959) and *Fratelli d'Italia* (1963). The period in which these works were written and published was one of great linguistic changes, with Italian starting to become the language spoken by the majority of the population and the consequent formation of a new variety, the *italiano dell'uso medio*. This social evolution has also consequences for the language of narrative: whereas some authors embrace the *lingua media* and a clear, communicative style (*stile semplice*), others reject it and opt for linguistic experimentation. Although Arbasino is typically placed in this second slant of narrative writing, one cannot so easily assign him to a group or stream, since from the beginning of his career he developed a personal poetics influenced by modernist writers, as well as his own ideas on language and style. The aims of this study are first of all to chart the birth and diachronic evolution of Arbasino's style, and evaluate the influence of his syntactic choices on it. Then investigate how the syntax of each work compares to the lines of development of contemporary Italian and to the language of contemporary narrative. My analysis begins with a comprehensive outline of the features of contemporary Italian and of the styles of writing in post-war narrative, ending with a focus on the character of Arbasino's poetics and ideas on language and style in the decade 1954-1964. A brief chapter then illustrates the methodology used, based on quantitative analysis of syntactic aspects, and clarifies terminology. Thereafter, the core of the thesis is composed of three case studies that examine thoroughly the syntax of the sentence and other important syntactic devices of the three works separately, comparing data with corpora of Italian and with studies on narrative language. Finally, a concluding chapter highlights the lines of development of syntax and style in the three works. On the basis of this research, it is clear that the syntax of the sentence places Arbasino among experimental writers tending to break with the linguistic standard. Moreover, Arbasino's syntactic choices in the three works reflect an increasing distance from traditional literary modes of representation and the progressive affirmation of his own literary project, founded in the poetics of *realismo critico*.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract | 3 |
| List of Tables | 7 |
| Acknowledgements | 11 |
| Author's Declaration | 13 |
| Abbreviations | 15 |
| Introduction | 17 |
| 1 Contemporary Italian and Literary Italian: Tendencies and Features | 23 |
| 1.1 Italian Language in the Post-War Era | 23 |
| 1.2 Italian Language and Style in the Novel (1945-1970) | 29 |
| 1.2.1 Arbasino | 39 |
| 2 Corpus and Methodology | 51 |
| 2.1 Corpus | 51 |
| 2.2 Structure of the Analysis | 52 |
| 2.3 Tools and Definitions | 55 |
| 3 Case Study 1. <i>Le piccole vacanze</i> as Stylistic Laboratory | 63 |
| 3.1 Length and Composition of the Sentence | 68 |
| 3.1.1 Length | 68 |
| 3.1.2 Composition of the Sentence | 77 |
| 3.2 Syntactic Links inside the Sentence: Coordination and Subordination .. | 85 |
| 3.2.1 Syndetic and Asyndetic Coordination | 88 |
| 3.2.2 Subordination | 95 |
| 3.3 Nominal Style | 111 |
| 3.3.1 Nominal Appositions: The Legacy of Literary Language | 113 |
| 3.3.2 Predicative Nominal Sentences: Between Lyricism and Dynamic Reportage | 114 |
| 3.3.3 Predicative Nominal Clauses at the Beginning of the Sentence and Lists: The Birth of Stylistic Features | 117 |
| 3.4 Punctuation | 119 |
| 3.4.1 'Emotional' Punctuation | 119 |
| 3.4.2 Fragmenting Punctuation | 121 |
| 3.4.3 Hints of Orality | 122 |
| 3.5 Conclusion | 125 |
| 4 Case study 2. <i>Il ragazzo perduto</i> : A Stylistic Turning Point | 129 |
| 4.1 General Aspects of the Structure of the Sentence | 135 |
| 4.1.1 Length | 135 |
| 4.1.2 Composition of the Sentence | 140 |
| 4.2 Syntactic Links inside the Sentence: Coordination and Subordination .. | 146 |

| | | |
|-------|---|-----|
| 4.2.1 | Syndetic and Asyndetic Coordination..... | 148 |
| 4.2.2 | Subordination | 152 |
| 4.3 | Parenthetical Clauses | 166 |
| 4.3.1 | Disruption and Excess | 166 |
| 4.3.2 | Points of View and Reification..... | 169 |
| 4.3.3 | Linearity and Interactivity | 171 |
| 4.4 | Nominal Style | 173 |
| 4.4.1 | Rhythm | 174 |
| 4.4.2 | Stereotypes..... | 175 |
| 4.4.3 | Open lists | 177 |
| 4.5 | Punctuation | 179 |
| 4.5.1 | Loose and Tight | 179 |
| 4.5.2 | Omission and Redundancy..... | 181 |
| 4.5.3 | Spoken Prosody | 183 |
| 4.6 | Conclusion | 184 |
| 5 | Case Study 3. <i>Fratelli d'Italia</i> : A Stylistic Encyclopaedia..... | 187 |
| 5.1 | Length and Composition of the Sentence | 192 |
| 5.1.1 | Length..... | 192 |
| 5.1.2 | Composition of the sentence | 203 |
| 5.2 | Syntactic Links inside the Sentence: Coordination and Subordination . | 210 |
| 5.2.1 | Syndetic and Asyndetic Coordination..... | 213 |
| 5.2.2 | Subordination | 218 |
| 5.3 | Nominal Style | 237 |
| 5.3.1 | Rapidity, Conciseness and Objectivity | 238 |
| 5.3.2 | The Triumph of the Stereotype..... | 241 |
| 5.3.3 | Lists 'Arbasino Style' | 245 |
| 5.4 | Punctuation | 253 |
| 5.4.1 | Unconventional Colons..... | 254 |
| 5.4.2 | Fragmenting Semicolons and Full Stops | 255 |
| 5.4.3 | Marks of Orality | 257 |
| 5.5 | Conclusion | 259 |
| 6 | Conclusion: Lines of Development of Arbasino's Syntax and Style | 263 |
| | Bibliography | 277 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 2-1 - No. of words, clauses and sentences analysed in PV, RP and FI..... | 52 |
| Table 3-1 - Length PV..... | 68 |
| Table 3-2 - Length short stories diegesis..... | 69 |
| Table 3-3 - Length short stories mimesis | 73 |
| Table 3-4 - Composition PV | 77 |
| Table 3-5 - Composition short stories diegesis | 78 |
| Table 3-6 - Composition short stories mimesis..... | 82 |
| Table 3-7 - Syntactic links PV..... | 86 |
| Table 3-8 - Syntactic links short stories diegesis | 86 |
| Table 3-9 - Syntactic links short stories mimesis | 87 |
| Table 3-10 - Degree of subordination PV..... | 95 |
| Table 3-11 - Degree of subordination short stories diegesis | 96 |
| Table 3-12 - Degree of subordination short stories mimesis | 99 |
| Table 3-13 - Distribution of subordinates PV | 101 |
| Table 3-14 - Distribution of subordinates short stories diegesis..... | 101 |
| Table 3-15 - Distribution of subordinates short stories mimesis..... | 103 |
| Table 3-16 - Types of subordinates PV | 105 |
| Table 3-17 - Nominal style PV | 112 |
| Table 3-18 - Nominal style short stories | 112 |
| Table 4-1 - Length RP..... | 135 |
| Table 4-2 - Length: Comparison RP, Cronache, Pasticciaccio | 136 |
| Table 4-3 - Length: Comparison PV, RP | 136 |
| Table 4-4 - Composition RP | 140 |
| Table 4-5 - Composition: Comparison RP, Cronache, Pasticciaccio..... | 141 |
| Table 4-6 - Composition: Comparison PV, RP | 141 |
| Table 4-7 - Syntactic links RP..... | 146 |
| Table 4-8 - Syntactic links: Comparison PV, RP..... | 147 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 4-9 - Syntactic links: Comparison RP, Cronache, Pasticciaccio | 147 |
| Table 4-10 - Degree of subordination RP | 153 |
| Table 4-11 - Degree of subordination: Comparison PV, RP..... | 153 |
| Table 4-12 - Degree of sub.: Comparison RP, Cronache, Pasticciaccio..... | 154 |
| Table 4-13 - Distribution of subordinates RP | 157 |
| Table 4-14 - Distribution of subordinates: Comparison PV, RP | 158 |
| Table 4-15 - Distribution of sub.: Comparison RP, Cronache, Pasticciaccio | 159 |
| Table 4-16 - Types of subordinates RP | 159 |
| Table 4-17 - Nominal style: Comparison PV, RP | 174 |
| Table 5-1 - Length FI..... | 193 |
| Table 5-2 - Length: Comparison FI, Eco, Lessico | 194 |
| Table 5-3 - Length: Comparison RP, FI | 195 |
| Table 5-4 - Length: Comparison FI, Lessico mimesis | 200 |
| Table 5-5 - Composition FI | 203 |
| Table 5-6 - Composition: Comparison FI, Lessico diegesis | 204 |
| Table 5-7 - Composition: Comparison RP, FI | 204 |
| Table 5-8 - Composition: Comparison PV, FI | 207 |
| Table 5-9 - Composition: Comparison FI, Lessico mimesis | 207 |
| Table 5-10 - Syntactic links FI | 210 |
| Table 5-11 - Syntactic links: Comparison RP, FI | 211 |
| Table 5-12 - Syntactic links: Comparison FI, Lessico diegesis | 211 |
| Table 5-13 - Syntactic links: Comparison PV, FI | 212 |
| Table 5-14 - Syntactic links: Comparison FI, Lessico mimesis | 213 |
| Table 5-15 - Degree of subordination FI | 219 |
| Table 5-16 - Degree of subordination: Comparison FI, Lessico diegesis..... | 220 |
| Table 5-17 - Degree of subordination: Comparison RP, FI..... | 221 |
| Table 5-18 - Degree of subordination: Comparison FI, Lessico mimesis..... | 225 |
| Table 5-19 - Degree of subordination: Comparison PV, FI..... | 226 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 5-20 - Distribution of subordinates FI | 228 |
| Table 5-21 - Distribution of subordinates: Comparison RP, FI | 229 |
| Table 5-22 - Distribution of subordinates: Comparison FI, Lessico diegesis | 230 |
| Table 5-23 - Distribution of subordinates: Comparison FI, Lessico mimesis | 231 |
| Table 5-24 - Distribution of subordinates: Comparison PV, FI | 231 |
| Table 5-25 - Types of subordinates FI | 232 |
| Table 5-26 - Non-finite clauses: Comparison RP, FI | 234 |
| Table 5-27 - Nominal style: Comparison PV, RP, FI | 237 |
| Table 6-1 - Length PV, RP, FI | 266 |
| Table 6-2 - Composition PV, RP, FI | 266 |
| Table 6-3 - Subordination PV, RP, FI | 266 |
| Table 6-4 - Average no. of words: Comparison PV, FI, Lessico | 269 |
| Table 6-5 - Nominal style PV, RP, FI..... | 272 |

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Debora Agazzoni

Abbreviations

Arbasino's works:

| | |
|----|---------------------------|
| FI | <i>Fratelli d'Italia</i> |
| PV | <i>Le piccole vacanze</i> |
| RP | <i>Il ragazzo perduto</i> |

Tools:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| CoLFIS | <i>Corpus e Lessico di Frequenza dell'Italiano Scritto</i> |
| GDLI | <i>Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana</i> |
| GGIC | <i>Grande Grammatica Italiana di Consultazione</i> |
| GRADIT | <i>Grande Dizionario Italiano dell'uso</i> |
| PTLLIN | <i>Primo Tesoro della Lingua Letteraria Italiana del Novecento</i> |
| Sabatini-Coletti | <i>Sabatini-Coletti Dizionario della Lingua Italiana</i> |

Introduction

From post-war Italy up to the present Alberto Arbasino has been the epitome of the all-round man of culture: novelist, poet, essayist, journalist, art critic, opera critic, polemist, politician, TV presenter, traveller, and socialite.¹ His voracious curiosity and cosmopolitanism have allowed him to always remain up to date with the latest literary, philosophical, sociological theories and occupy a prominent position in the debate for the renovation of Italian culture, especially in the years following WW2. His tireless observation of cultural and social changes throughout his career made him an acute critic of turning points in Italian history, documenting the tics, manias, and whims of each epoch, to the point that some of the expressions he invented - *la gita a Chiasso*, *la casalinga di Voghera* - have become commonplace expressions used to identify certain cultural and social conditions.² Regardless of genre, any written work that comes out of his pen is characterised by a unique style, marked by parodic accumulation of references, allusions, quotations of other works, linguistic tics and commonplaces.

For all these reasons Arbasino, now an octogenarian, has entered the pantheon of the ‘venerati maestri’ (as one of his ironic jokes goes), being honoured some years ago with the publication of his works in the series *I Meridiani* by Mondadori (2009) - a privilege that very few authors are granted alive.³ Today, although the critical bibliography on Arbasino is vast, it is mainly composed of journal articles, interviews or short essays rather than of more extended studies or monographs. The key exceptions to this rule are: three short introductory studies of Arbasino’s life and works, some of which rather dated (1979, 1980 and

¹ From 1955 to 2016, Arbasino has published more than forty books, collaborated with more than thirty journals and magazines, presented one TV programme (*Match*, 1977) and has been an MP for *Partito Repubblicano* during the term 1983-1987.

² His article *La gita a Chiasso* (1963) is famous for being a strong condemnation of the narrow-mindedness of Italian culture and an exhortation to intellectuals to take a look at what was happening in terms of new theories and disciplines across borders. Arbasino also wrote several novels set between the end of WW2 and the Italian Economic Boom (*Le piccole vacanze*, *Fratelli d'Italia*, *La bella di Lodi*, 1972), and three pamphlets about the 1970s (*Fantasma italiani*, 1977, *Un paese senza*, 1980), one specifically on the kidnapping and killing of Aldo Moro (*In questo stato*, 1978). Most of his works parody the language, rituals and look of the time (e.g. *Fratelli d'Italia*, *Rap!*, 2001 and *La vita bassa*, 2008).

³ ‘In Italia c’è un momento stregato in cui si passa dalla categoria di “brillante promessa” a quella di “solito stronzo”. Soltanto a pochi fortunati l’età concede poi di accedere alla dignità di “venerato maestro”’. Quotation in Federico Della Corte, *Come ombre vivaci sullo sfondo: studio su La bella di Lodi di Alberto Arbasino* (Padua: Libreriauniversitaria.it, 2014), p. 9.

2004), and two critical studies encompassing several of Arbasino's works (Giancarlo Leucadi's *La terra incognita della romanzeria*, 1994, and Nicola D'Antuono's *Forme e significati in Alberto Arbasino*, 2000). Then, one monographic number of the journal *Riga*, collecting some of Arbasino's texts, a selection of articles published over the years on the author and short thematic essays from different critics. Finally, one study on the rewritings of *Fratelli d'Italia* by Clelia Martignoni, Elisabetta Cammarata and Cinzia Lucchelli (1999) and one on *La bella di Lodi* by Federico Della Corte (2014).⁴

Accordingly, the intention of devoting my research project to this author was born from the consideration that many aspects of his writing are still awaiting an appropriate in-depth analysis. Among these, I identified a gap in the analysis of the language of Arbasino's works. Indeed, the critical bibliography lacks at the moment a thorough and substantial attention to linguistic aspects, despite language being the fundamental ingredient for the existence of Arbasino's style, and despite Arbasino being usually annexed to the lineage of 'irregular' writers of Italian literature, thus writers that make deliberate use of an excessive and abnormal language. Only Martignoni- Cammarata-Lucchelli's and Della Corte's monographs have devoted attention to general linguistic and stylistic aspects; still, they each focus on one work.⁵ I have decided instead to concentrate on a specific linguistic level, syntax, and on its contribution to the style of three of Arbasino's works - *Le piccole vacanze* (1957), *Il ragazzo perduto* (1959) and *Fratelli d'Italia* (1963).⁶

The choice of these three works is motivated by the fact that they are the earliest published by Arbasino and they tell us about the progress made by an author at the beginning of his career looking to find his own 'voice'. *Le piccole*

⁴ Elisabetta Bolla, *Invito alla lettura di Arbasino* (Milan: Mursia, 1979); Maria Luisa Vecchi, *Alberto Arbasino* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1980); Giuseppe Panella, *Alberto Arbasino* (Fiesole: Cadmo, 2004); Giancarlo Leucadi, *La terra incognita della romanzeria: saggio su Alberto Arbasino* (Bologna: Printer, 1994); Nicola D'Antuono, *Forme e significati in Alberto Arbasino* (Pescara: Campus, 2000); *Alberto Arbasino*, ed. by Marco Belpoliti and Elio Grazioli, *Riga*, 18 (Milan: Marcos y Marcos, 2001); Clelia Martignoni, Elisabetta Cammarata, Cinzia Lucchelli, *La scrittura infinita di Alberto Arbasino* (Novara: Interlinea, 1999).

⁵ Martignoni-Lucchelli-Cammarata's study has a philologic approach, while Della Corte's study has a narratological and stylistic approach.

⁶ Alberto Arbasino, *Le piccole vacanze* (Turin: Einaudi, 1957); Alberto Arbasino, *Il ragazzo perduto*, in Alberto Arbasino, *L'Anonimo Lombardo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1959), pp. 307-476; Alberto Arbasino, *Fratelli d'Italia*, in Alberto Arbasino, *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Raffaele Manica, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2009), I, 577-1140.

vacanze collects some of his first ever written short stories, where different styles are tested; *Il ragazzo perduto* - better known today as *L'Anonimo Lombardo* - is the short novel where Arbasino decisively adopts experimentalism; whereas *Fratelli d'Italia* is the novel where the author delineates his own personal style. Most critics find a stylistic continuity only between *Il ragazzo perduto* and *Fratelli d'Italia*, while fewer include *Le piccole vacanze*; however, this research will clarify how this first work also has to be considered as part of Arbasino's stylistic quest.⁷ In other words, the three works together open and close a phase of Arbasino's writing career, that of the author's search for and definition of his style.⁸ The subsequent narrative works will indeed belong to a different period of time (the end of 1960s and the early 1970s) and will be characterised by a further elaboration of the style of *Fratelli*.⁹ Moreover, as we will see, this style is closely linked to Arbasino's artistic project, which is also developing in these years and will achieve a more definite outlining with the last work studied, *Fratelli d'Italia*. The first aim of my thesis will be therefore tracing the birth and development of Arbasino's style, through the analysis of the syntax of the sentence of each of Arbasino's early works, and their comparison. Contextually, it will be highlighted how stylistic choices in each work reflect the wider poetics of the author.

Arbasino's early works are interesting also for a related reason: they are written and published from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, in a period of instability

⁷ Among those who do not consider *Le piccole vacanze* as part of Arbasino's stylistic quest: Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, *La narrativa italiana del Dopoguerra* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1969), p. 195; Goffredo Fofi, *Strade maestre: ritratti di scrittori italiani* (Rome: Donzelli, 1996), pp. 64-5; Raffaele Manica, 'Antirealisti, astrattisti, informali: Alberto Arbasino', in *Rizzoli-Larousse Letteratura italiana del Novecento. Sperimentalismo e tradizione del nuovo: dalla contestazione al postmoderno 1960-2000*, ed. by Nino Borsellino and Walter Pedullà, 3 vols (Milan: Motta, 2000), III, 305-14 (pp. 307-9); Renato Barilli, *La neoavanguardia italiana: dalla nascita del Verri alla fine di Quindici* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995), pp. 154-52; Clelia Martignoni, 'Arbasino la coerenza della complessità', in Clelia Martignoni, Elisabetta Cammarata, Cinzia Lucchelli, *La scrittura infinita di Alberto Arbasino* (Novara: Interlinea, 1999), pp. 7-22 (p. 7). Among those who consider them: Eugenio Ragni, Toni Iermano, 'Il virtuosismo parodico di Alberto Arbasino e l'ilarotragedia di Giorgio Manganelli', in *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. by Enrico Malato, 9 vols (Milano: Il Sole 24 Ore, 2005), 9: *Il Novecento*, II: *Il secondo Novecento*, 1034-39 (pp. 1034-36); Vecchi, *Alberto Arbasino*, p. 27; Panella, *Alberto Arbasino*, p. 29.

⁸ Indeed the first volume of the *Meridiano* Mondadori contains these three works and the critical essay *Certi romanzi* (1964), reinforcing the idea that they are conceived as a block by Arbasino himself, who personally decided what to include in the two volumes of *Meridiani*.

⁹ I am referring to *Super-Eliogabalo* (1969), *La bella di Lodi* (1972), *Il principe costante* (1972), and *Specchio delle mie brame* (1974). There are two short texts published in 1964, *La narcisata – La controra*, which could be considered a sort of appendix to the first narrative period. However, in the *Meridiani* they appear in the second volume and not in the first one together with the works studied in this thesis.

from a linguistic and literary point of view. First of all, the Italian language in those years was starting to become the language spoken everyday by an increasing number of Italians, with the consequent formation of a new standard, the *lingua media*. Furthermore, in literature, with the end of the Neorealist period, authors were seeking new modes of expression and representation. Many chose *stile semplice*, a style that has primarily a communicative aim, and entails the use of *lingua media*. Others instead rejected contentiously *stile semplice* and its *lingua media*, opting for experimental styles where languages of different epochs, spaces and registers clash with parodic or polemic aims. In this variegated literary landscape, Arbasino is normally collocated among those authors that rejected the use of *lingua media*. However, he is also considered a sort of outsider, not easily integrated into a group, school or style; an author that follows his own models and artistic project. Consequently, the second aim of my thesis will be assessing where Arbasino's writing is in line and where it breaks with the standard of contemporary Italian, as well as evaluating how his syntactic choices compare to those of authors in *stile semplice* and of other experimental authors.

Finally, the decision to analyse the syntax of the sentence and not another aspect of language comes from the scarcity of such analysis, especially concerning 'irregular' writers of the Italian tradition, where lexis is more commonly the focus.¹⁰ While this choice means having fewer terms of comparison - and sometimes having to create my own corpus of data from other authors - it is fruitful for a number of reasons.¹¹ Firstly, the focus on less immediately visible aspects of Arbasino's writing will show how this author has meticulously worked also on the structure of language, and how some decisive elements for the construction of his style are actually syntactic devices. Secondly, the methodology used - based on quantitative analysis of syntactic aspects - allows the gathering of a set of data on Arbasino's syntax that can be

¹⁰ For example, Luigi Matt laments the scarcity of studies on Gadda's syntax. Luigi Matt, *Gadda* (Rome: Carocci, 2006), p. 23.

¹¹ As it will be better explained in the chapter on methodology, at the moment there are not many studies which present a quantitative analysis of the syntax of the sentence of literary texts. Similarly, there are not many corpora of literary texts of the second half of the twentieth century and, when they are available, research on syntax is not possible (I am thinking of Tullio De Mauro's *Primo Tesoro della lingua letteraria italiana del Novecento*). What is available for consultation is usually the study by the scholar who gathered the corpus, which contains some statistical data. Bibliographic details in the chapter on methodology.

effectively used as a term of comparison for other similar analyses of post-WW2 Italian authors. In this way, my research could form the basis for future studies on the lines of development of literary syntax of the second half of twentieth century.

The thesis is structured as follows: a first introductory chapter to the linguistic and literary situation in Italy from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, with a focus on Arbasino's position within this landscape and on the author's poetics. It is followed by a methodological chapter, where I will describe the corpus and the methodology used, as well as clarify terminology. The core of the thesis is formed by three case studies, one for each work, where the syntactic analysis will be presented through data and passages from the texts. The main questions I will answer in each case study concern both the work analysed in its individuality and in comparison with Arbasino's previous work and other contemporary works: to what extent is the syntax in line with contemporary Italian? Where does it deviate? How does syntax compare to that of Arbasino's previous work and of other contemporary writers? What kind of stylistic choices do these deviations from the standard, differences and similarities from other works represent and how do they reflect Arbasino's ideas on literature? In conclusion, following the three case studies, a final chapter will summarize the main syntactic and stylistic lines of development of Arbasino's early works, and assess the ways the author's poetics is revealed in *Le piccole vacanze*, *Il ragazzo perduto* and *Fratelli d'Italia* respectively.

1 Contemporary Italian and Literary Italian: Tendencies and Features

1.1 Italian Language in the Post-War Era

The period after the end of WW2 and in particular from the 1950s onwards marks a historic moment for Italian language. From a language essentially written, Italian starts to become also the language spoken by the majority of inhabitants of the peninsula. Italians begin to speak more Italian and less dialect for various reasons: education and literacy reaching wider parts of the population, internal migrations, increase in the use of Italian in public institutions (local authorities, schools, public or private cultural institutes, etc.), and, last but not least, the economic development brought by the Economic Boom. Italian language not only enters the everyday life of Italians through television, but it also becomes a sign of distinction and prestige for those who are hoping to change their social status for the better.¹ Data are telling: in 1951 18.5% of the population speak only Italian, 18% are diglossic (speaking both Italian and dialect) and 63.5% only speak dialect, whereas in 1981 29.4% are Italian speakers, 23.9% are diglossic and 46.7% are dialect speakers. Thus, in only thirty years and for the first time, speakers of Italian (Italian speakers plus diglossic) overtake dialect speakers, thanks to the economic, social and cultural changes mentioned.²

The increase in Italian speakers has many important consequences: the gradual Italianization of dialects (especially in terms of lexis); the coming closer of spoken and written Italian; the formation of different varieties of Italian, that is, the differentiation of the type of Italian used according to variables such as the formality or informality of the situation, the medium (written or spoken), the education of the speaker and her provenance. The centuries-old duality Italian-dialects, based on diatopic (geographic) and diastratic (social) variations, as well as on a clear distinction between written and spoken pole of the language, has

¹ See for a detailed discussion of economic, social and cultural changes in post-war Italy, Tullio De Mauro, 'Dagli anni Cinquanta ai Duemila: cambiamenti sociali e culturali e loro riflessi linguistici', in Tullio De Mauro, *Storia linguistica dell'Italia repubblicana: dal 1946 ai nostri giorni* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2014), pp. 53-110.

² Riccardo Tesi, 'Una fase ancora aperta: l'italiano contemporaneo', in Riccardo Tesi, *Storia dell'italiano: la lingua moderna e contemporanea* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 2005), pp. 199-250 (pp. 214-15).

transformed into many graduated levels - the varieties of Italian.³ These not only can be classified according to diatopic and diastratic variations, but also to diaphasic (situational) and diamesic (concerning the medium) variations. Over the years linguists have proposed many scales of the varieties of Italian, with different levels of complexity.⁴ However, four varieties have emerged as clearly identifiable: *italiano standard*, *italiano dell'uso medio*, *italiano regionale* and *italiano popolare*.⁵

Among these four core varieties, the real novelty was represented by *italiano dell'uso medio*.⁶ The notion of *italiano dell'uso medio* raised many lively discussions, which also brought other alternative denominations to bloom, such as *italiano comune* or *italiano neostandard*. The first to formally propose it as a variety of Italian was Francesco Sabatini, in his famous 1985 essay “‘L’italiano dell’uso medio’: una realtà tra le varietà linguistiche italiane’. Sabatini defines this variety as national, spoken by all social classes at every level of literacy, and used both in spoken and written form in situations of average formality.⁷ He also lists some thirty-five phonologic, morphologic, syntactic and lexical devices and structures that characterize *italiano dell'uso medio* and help distinguish it from the standard. These are mainly coming from oral Italian: some of them were already present in old oral Italian (and in mimetic representations in literature), but subsequently censored by the norm and confined to dialects or regional Italian; some others are more recent.

Sabatini recognizes that these traits can also be found - in a more marked way and in addition to other traits - in varieties that are mostly oral and informal, such as *italiano regionale* and *italiano popolare*. Moreover, the borders between *italiano dell'uso medio* and *italiano regionale* are blurred insofar as intonation

³ Maurizio Dardano, ‘Tra innovazione e conservazione’, in *L’italiano di oggi*, ed. by Maurizio Dardano and Gianluca Frenguelli (Rome: Aracne, 2008), pp. 15-42 (p. 21).

⁴ From the four varieties proposed by Pellegrini in 1960 to the nine varieties identified by Berruto in 1987. Dardano, ‘Tra innovazione e conservazione’, p. 21.

⁵ Luca Lorenzetti, *L’italiano contemporaneo* (Rome: Carocci, 2002), p. 23.

⁶ Lorenzetti, *L’italiano contemporaneo*, p. 28. *Italiano standard* dates back to the sixteenth century, while *italiano regionale* to the end of the eighteenth century. *Italiano popolare* appears at the end of the nineteenth century.

⁷ Francesco Sabatini, “‘L’italiano dell’uso medio’: una realtà tra le varietà linguistiche italiane’ in *Gesprochenes Italienisch in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. by Günter Holtus and Edgar Radtke (Tübingen: Narr, 1985), pp. 154-84 (p. 171).

and pronunciation are concerned, since in spoken language Italians can never escape from their own regional intonation and pronunciation. However, Sabatini stresses that what makes *italiano dell'uso medio* a 'reality' is the fact that its features are shared both in spoken and written form on a national basis, thus that it is not influenced by regional syntactic and lexical traits. Finally, he argues that *italiano dell'uso medio* could compete for becoming the new standard Italian because of its increasing use in the media and in literary works.⁸

A few years later, in 1987, Gaetano Berruto welcomes Sabatini's arguments about the existence of a national, both written and spoken variety of Italian and he inserts it in his description of the varieties of Italian, calling it *italiano neostandard*. *Italiano neostandard* mainly corresponds to Sabatini's *italiano dell'uso medio*, with two differences: 1) the *italiano neostandard* is slightly regionally connoted (but also Sabatini recognized that the *italiano dell'uso medio* has regional traits when spoken); 2) it does not apply to spoken, informal Italian of educated speakers: Berruto labels the latter instead as *italiano colloquiale*.⁹ Moreover, the choice of the adjective *neostandard* puts the stress on the existence of a new standard of Italian for Berruto, represented by this variety. Meanwhile, some reactions to Sabatini's and Berruto's thesis started to arise: Luca Serianni, in 1986, points out that written Italian still sticks to the 'norma scritta tradizionale', that is, *italiano standard*. He agrees on the presence of an *italiano dell'uso medio* in spoken language, but not in written language.¹⁰ Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, in 1994, acknowledges the existence of *italiano dell'uso medio*, subject to the recognition that 'si tratta di una categoria ottenuta mettendo tra parentesi i fenomeni che caratterizzano il parlato medio regionalmente e localmente, specie nella prosodia e fonologia e nel lessico'.¹¹ However, in the light of Serianni's observations, he is cautious about agreeing on the presence of a new standardization.

⁸ Sabatini, 'L'italiano dell'uso medio', pp. 174-75.

⁹ Also Berruto's list of devices and structures is the same as Sabatini's (just increased). Gaetano Berruto, *Sociolinguistica dell'italiano contemporaneo* (Rome: Carocci, 1987), p. 24.

¹⁰ Luca Serianni, 'Il problema della norma linguistica dell'italiano', *Annali dell'Università per Stranieri di Perugia*, 7 (1986), 47-69.

¹¹ Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, *Storia della lingua italiana: il Novecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994), p. 96.

More recently, also Riccardo Tesi and Maurizio Dardano have contested the label *italiano neostandard*. In particular, they question the notion that devices such as dislocations, cleft sentences, *ci attualizzante* and *che 'polivalente'* are the signs of a new standardization of Italian. Since these devices have always been used in Italian over the centuries (although banned by grammars), according to Tesi they are normal phenomena of Italian, not significant to define a new standard.¹²

More meaningful for Tesi is to look at changes over a longer period of time, to detect which ones are part of 'drift movements' from the standard and which ones are more innovative. From a syntactic point of view, for example, he identifies from the eighteenth century onwards a progressive simplification of syntactic structures. His perspective is a historic-linguistic one, less focussed on contextual and situational variables, therefore he uses the denomination *italiano contemporaneo*. Similarly, Dardano rejects the presence of an *italiano neostandard* and prefers to refer to the new variety of Italian that formed in the post-war period as *lingua media* or *comune*.¹³ He also presents a list of phenomena characterizing *lingua media*, concerning lexis, syntax and textuality.

Finally, Luca Lorenzetti calls this variety of Italian *italiano neostandard*, but he also welcomes other possible specifications (*comune*, *dell'uso medio*, *tendenziale*, *senza aggettivi*). He defines it as

una varietà d'italiano, scritta e parlata, che coincide in buona parte con lo standard normativo, ma accoglie una serie molto ampia di fenomeni in passato rifiutati o sconsigliati dallo standard. Molti di questi fenomeni, che possono essere presenti in italiano da vari secoli oppure essersi sviluppati solo di recente, hanno come denominatore comune il fatto di essere propri del parlato.¹⁴

He sees it as coinciding with *italiano contemporaneo*, and the label he uses is *italiano neostandard contemporaneo*, opposed to the *italiano standard tradizionale*. From this perspective, he includes in the description of *italiano neostandard contemporaneo* also those devices contested by Tesi and Dardano (dislocations, cleft sentences, *che 'polivalente'*, etc.), since they distinguish it

¹² Studies such as Paolo D'Achille's *Sintassi del parlato e tradizione scritta della lingua italiana* (1990) and Enrico Testa's *Simulazione di parlato: fenomeni dell'oralità nelle novelle del Quattro-Cinquecento* (1991) have shown the presence of these devices in early Italian. Tesi, 'Una fase ancora aperta: l'italiano contemporaneo', p. 229.

¹³ Dardano, 'Tra innovazione e conservazione', p. 20.

¹⁴ Lorenzetti, *L'italiano contemporaneo*, p. 28.

from the traditional standard Italian, where they were not accepted. For Lorenzetti it is acceptable to call these constructions ‘contemporary’ because even though they have been in use for centuries, they are still widespread today and actually their use is expanding and becoming more and more normal.¹⁵

In my analysis, having considered the positions outlined here, I will use the expressions *italiano contemporaneo* or *lingua media* according to the aspect I want to stress in that moment, either the historical or the contextual and situational one. With these expressions I mean the Italian of contemporary common usage, both written and spoken, which includes in written language elements of spoken language previously discarded by the traditional standard and tends towards a simplification of the structures due to the influence of spoken language. The following is a list of the main syntactic features of *italiano contemporaneo*, to which I will constantly refer during the analysis:

- The simplification of syntax in writing. This phenomenon started in the second half of the eighteenth century and accelerated during the years of the Economic Boom under the influence of spoken Italian. The simplification concerns the depth of the sentence, i.e. the level of embedding of subordinate clauses. It entails, firstly, the preference for the coordination of clauses and, secondly, the reduction of the degree of subordination of subordinate clauses to the minimum.¹⁶ Tesi, by comparing the results of analyses on corpora of written texts and spoken language, concludes that ‘l’italiano contemporaneo, in condizioni normali, non scende oltre la soglia del 2° grado di subordinazione, se non in casi molto limitati e quantitativamente prossimi allo zero’.¹⁷ The simplification seems also to concern length: De Mauro registers the tendency to use ‘periodi lineari e brevi’ both in literary and journalistic writing.¹⁸
- A decreasing variety of subordinating conjunctions. The simplification of syntax concerns also the reduction of the variety, semantic value and

¹⁵ Lorenzetti, *L’italiano contemporaneo*, p. 86.

¹⁶ Tesi, ‘Una fase ancora aperta: l’italiano contemporaneo’, p. 230.

¹⁷ Tesi, ‘Una fase ancora aperta: l’italiano contemporaneo’, p. 233.

¹⁸ De Mauro, *Storia linguistica dell’Italia repubblicana*, p. 153.

syntactic function of conjunctions introducing subordinate clauses.¹⁹ Maggi Rombi and Gianna Policarpi report *che, come, dove, finché, mentre, perché, quando, quanto* among the most frequent conjunctions in contemporary Italian.²⁰ According to Sabatini *italiano medio* prefers for causal clauses *siccome, dato che*, while *poiché, giacché* are very rare. For final clauses it uses *perché* or *per* + infinitive instead of *affinché*. For indirect questions, *come mai* is more and more widespread instead of *perché*, as a way to 'soften' questions.²¹ Very widespread is also *che* 'polivalente', i.e. conjunction *che* generically replacing other semantically more precise conjunctions in consecutive, causal, final, relative-temporal clauses ('Vieni, che ti pettino', 'Andiamo a casa, che ho sonno', 'Il giorno che ti ho incontrato').²² This use of *che* is registered also in old Italian.²³ Moreover, linguists register the increasing preference for indicative instead of subjunctive in noun and concessive clauses (e.g. 'spero che venite' instead of 'che veniate') and indicative instead of subjunctive and conditional in hypothetical clauses ('se ti vedevo subito, era meglio', instead of 'se ti avessi visto subito, sarebbe stato meglio').²⁴

- Modularity. By modularity Dardano means the frequent use - especially in newspaper writing - of nominalizations and word formation, which develop 'una compattezza frasale e testuale, in certo modo opposta alla struttura multiplanare e subordinativa della frase complessa, propria dell'italiano letterario'.²⁵ In particular, nominalizations (e.g. 'dichiarare l'inammissibilità del candidato' as opposed to the verbal type 'dichiarare che il candidato non può essere ammesso') help avoid subordination, favour the cohesion of the sentence and increase the visual impact: in

¹⁹ Maggi Rombi, Gianna Policarpi, 'Mutamenti sintattici nell'italiano contemporaneo: il sistema delle congiunzioni', in *Linguistica storica e cambiamento linguistico: atti del XVI Congresso internazionale di studi, Firenze 7-9 maggio 1982* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1985), pp. 225-44 (pp. 239-41).

²⁰ Rombi, Policarpi, 'Mutamenti sintattici nell'italiano contemporaneo', p. 231.

²¹ Sabatini, 'L'italiano dell'uso medio', p. 166.

²² Sabatini, 'L'italiano dell'uso medio', p. 164.

²³ Raffaele Simone, 'Stabilità e instabilità nei caratteri originali dell'italiano', in *Introduzione all'italiano contemporaneo: le strutture*, ed. by Alberto A. Sobrero (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1996), pp. 41-100 (pp. 93-4).

²⁴ Tesi, 'Una fase ancora aperta: l'italiano contemporaneo', p. 231; Simone, 'Stabilità e instabilità nei caratteri originali dell'italiano', pp. 66-7.

²⁵ Dardano, 'Tra innovazione e conservazione', pp. 35-6.

other words, they are also ways of simplifying the sentence. More in general, De Mauro underlines the increasing importance of nominal style - above all descriptive and predicative nominal clauses - in journalistic and narrative texts, as a means to 'sveltire il periodare'.²⁶

- Marked word orders. Marked orders are changes to the natural word order of the elements of the Italian clause (Subject-Verb-Object), with the function of changing the informative structure of the clause and conveying emphasis to part of it, either the *topic*, what is being talked about, or the *comment*, what is said about the topic. They have been present in Italian for centuries, normally used in spoken Italian and, although criticized by traditional grammars, also in certain varieties of written Italian.²⁷ With written language coming closer to spoken language, they became accepted in a wider range of written texts, such as for example journalism and narrative prose.²⁸ The most frequent marked word orders are: left and right dislocations, cleft sentences, hanging topics.²⁹

After this overview of the post-war linguistic situation in Italy and of *italiano contemporaneo*, we can now take a look more specifically at how narrative reacted to the emergence of a national and common language.

1.2 Italian Language and Style in the Novel (1945-1970)

The period of great linguistic change that followed the end of WW2 also had consequences for literary language. Already around the time of Italy's Unification, writers had become aware of the problem of 'which' Italian to use in their works: traditional standard Italian was felt as too far from the spoken reality of the people but, on the other hand, a common spoken language did not exist at the time. The effort made by Manzoni to use contemporary middle-class

²⁶ De Mauro, *Storia linguistica dell'Italia repubblicana*, p. 154.

²⁷ It is well-known that a left dislocation is contained in the first document in Italian, the *Placiti cassinesi* (960 a.D.): 'Sao ko kelle terre per kelle fini che ki contene, trent'anni le possette parti Sancti Benedicti'. Simone, 'Stabilità e instabilità nei caratteri originali dell'italiano', pp. 87-9.

²⁸ Dardano, 'Tra innovazione e conservazione', pp. 36-7; Lorenzo Renzi, 'Tendenze dell'italiano contemporaneo: note sul cambiamento linguistico nel breve periodo', *Studi di lessicografia italiana* (Florence: Accademia della Crusca, 2000), pp. 279-319 (pp. 296-99).

²⁹ Sabatini, 'L'italiano dell'uso medio', pp. 162-63; Lorenzetti, *L'italiano contemporaneo*, pp. 83-5.

spoken Florentine in his *I promessi sposi* (1840 edition) and to promote it as a model for the linguistic unification of Italy did not have the effects he desired.³⁰ On the other hand, in the post-war era the birth and progression of *lingua media* gave authors the opportunity to start using a language ‘viva e vera’, this time truly shared by most Italians. It also initiated heated debates among intellectuals, to the point that a *nuova questione della lingua* was hypothesized. In this section I would like to present the main directions taken by literary language in the period following the end of WW2, until approximately 1965. Since the authors’ choice of which language to use in a work of art is determined by expressive aims, I will relate the linguistic choices to styles and ideas of the work of art arising in those years.

Scholars such as Vittorio Coletti and Maria Corti suggest a partition of literary language in post-war novels into three main tendencies: the first is composed of Neorealist works, characterized by their opening up to dialects. The second consists in works that use *lingua media*. The third is made of works that reject *lingua media* and welcome linguistic experimentation instead.³¹ Let us see them more closely.

The Italian novel right after WW2 is mainly focused on the realist depiction of everyday situations, on the conditions of the vast majority of Italians who were struggling through poverty, on their experiences at war or in the *Resistenza*. The plurilingual situation at that time in Italy and the desire for a truthful depiction of the working class reality, motivated by political ideals, lead authors to open up their language to dialects, to *italiano regionale* and *italiano popolare*, especially in dialogues, and in general to combine literary language with the language of the masses.³² The modalities can be different from one author to the other: there is the scrupulous transcription of the spoken language of a particular geographical and social condition (dialect, *italiano popolare*), in a documentary style and without any apparent authorial intervention, as for

³⁰ Vittorio Coletti, *Storia dell'italiano letterario* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000), pp. 265-74.

³¹ For a synchronic and synoptic overview of Italian language and style in the second half of twentieth century see instead Giuseppe Antonelli, ‘Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana dagli anni Sessanta a oggi’, in *Rizzoli-Larousse Letteratura italiana del Novecento. Sperimentalismo e tradizione del nuovo: dalla contestazione al postmoderno 1960-2000*, ed. by Nino Borsellino and Walter Pedullà, 3 vols (Milan: Motta, 2000), III, 682-711.

³² Maria Corti, ‘Tre “campi di tensioni”’, in Maria Corti, *Il viaggio testuale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1978), pp. 19-166 (p. 73).

example in Dolci's *I banditi a Partinico* (1955). Some authors instead choose to use dialect in direct speech, to mimic the language of the characters, but not in narrative parts, as in Moravia's *Racconti romani* (1954) and Pasolini's *Ragazzi di vita* (1955). On the other hand, Cesare Pavese, in *Il compagno* (1947), rejects the use of dialect and chooses *italiano popolare*.

As Corti points out, the language of Neorealist narrative is generally composed of 'quattro codici di comunicazione: lingua comune media, italiano regionale, dialetto, lingua letteraria [...] che rimangono funzionalmente eterogenei'.³³ As far as syntax is concerned, Neorealist works present mainly asyndetic or polysyndetic parataxis, scarce use of hypotaxis, nominal style. Dialogue is the 'dominatore sintattico' of these works, although elements of the tradition do not lack, as for example *tricolon*. The morphosyntactic level combines respect for grammatical norms with mimesis of spoken language: in some cases *egli*, *ella*, *essi* are still used as subject pronouns, *gli* rarely replaces *loro* or *le*, the use of subjunctive still persists. On the other hand, we can find '*ci*' *attualizzante*, interrogative *cosa* instead of *che cosa*, '*che*' *polivalente* and segmentations of the sentence (marked word orders, pronoun redundancy). Lexis includes the use of interregional, regional and dialectal terms and expressions, while it excludes traditional literary vocabulary.³⁴

Meanwhile, from the mid-1950s, some authors decide to abandon the diglossia Italian-dialect in their works and start to use *lingua media*, thus a language that is not 'elevated' to the rank of traditional literary Italian and not 'lowered' to the rank of dialects and *italiano popolare*, but an average, common and national Italian. As we said, this attempt had already been made in the past; yet this time authors can draw on the average and common spoken language that Italians are starting to use in real situations. The use of *lingua media* for these authors is driven by the aspiration to communicate in a clear and straightforward way any type of content, unlike Neorealist authors, who used dialect, *italiano regionale*

³³ Corti, 'Tre "campi di tensioni"', p. 97.

³⁴ Corti, 'Tre "campi di tensioni"' pp. 80-96; Enrico Testa, *Lo stile semplice: discorso e romanzo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), pp. 223-31. I am aware of the variety of literary texts that go under the label 'Neorealism'; I am here referring to the results of Corti's and Testa's research. Corti analyses clandestine publications, Pavese and Pratolini's novels; Testa analyses Pavese, Pratolini, Fenoglio and Calvino's novels of the time.

or *popolare* in order to realistically represent a specific social reality.³⁵ This simply communicative aim and desire for clarity prompted the definition of *stile semplice* for these works. Enrico Testa, who invented this label, defines *stile semplice* as

un tipo di prosa narrativa in cui è dominante l'orientamento verso una lingua media e colloquiale, la cui 'naturalità' comunicativa determina una riduzione della centralità estetica della parola e, contemporaneamente, un incremento della finzione dell'aspetto eteronomo del linguaggio e dei suoi tratti denotativi (descrittivi, referenziali, oggettivi).³⁶

The passage to *lingua media* is clearly traceable in some authors from the 1950s onwards. For example, in the 1950s rewritings of their works Bassani, Cassola, Bilenchi and Testori clear the language of any dialect, opting for solutions in *lingua media* instead.³⁷ Pratolini and Sciascia in *La costanza della ragione* (1964) and in *Il giorno della civetta* (1961) choose to avoid the *italiano regionale* used in their earlier works.³⁸ In 1964, in the preface of the new edition of *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (first edition 1947) Calvino condemns the use of dialect in this novel. Calvino claims to be now against the 'secca diglossia lingua-dialetto' and to aim at the 'assorbimento del dialetto nella lingua'.³⁹

Indeed Calvino is one of the most important upholders of the literary rendering of *lingua media* and consequently of *stile semplice*: his late 1950s-early 1960s works, such as *Il barone rampante* (1957), embody some of the highest realizations of this style. His language tends, as he states in a 1965 essay, towards an 'italiano concreto e preciso', that is, an Italian that is communicative and straightforward but avoids vagueness and monotony, one of the flaws into which the prose in *lingua media* can fall. His writing is linear, paratactic; sentences are usually short and single-clause. However, linearity is often varied by inversions or segmentations, accumulations, parenthetical clauses. There are also typical features of orality, such as dislocations,

³⁵ Testa, *Lo stile semplice*, pp. 275-76.

³⁶ Testa, *Lo stile semplice*, p. 6.

³⁷ Ignazio Baldelli, 'Aspetti della lingua della prosa letteraria contemporanea', *Ulisse*, IX (Sept. 1968), 36-48 (pp. 42-7); Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', p. 684.

³⁸ Coletti, *Storia dell'italiano letterario*, pp. 342-44; Testa, *Lo stile semplice*, p. 274.

³⁹ Coletti, *Storia dell'italiano letterario*, p. 354.

redundant pronouns, '*che*' *polivalente*, '*ci*' *attualizzante* etc. Moreover, he uses the entire range of lexical possibilities offered by *lingua media*, from the more colloquial to the more learned ones, also using technical words if they help to clarify and give an idea of the complexity of reality.⁴⁰

Other examples of novels in *stile semplice* are offered by Levi's *La tregua* (1963) and Ginzburg's *Lessico familiare* (1963). Levi's language, helped by his scientific background, also strives for clarity and precision: his *lingua media* is more on the learned and literary side, as linguists identify an abundant use of series of adjectives, anaphora, alliterations, and a general grammatical correctness; yet colloquial expressions are also used.⁴¹ *Lessico familiare* rejects literary options and pursues orality by selecting simple syntactical structures and lexis from everyday spoken situations. Ginzburg's choice is a lower one compared to Calvino's and Levi's and looks at the colloquial register of *lingua media*.⁴² As we can see, there is not one single way to perform the 'literary version' of the average and national spoken Italian. Alongside the successful examples offered by Calvino, Levi and Ginzburg, there are less positive ones, where syntactic structures are monotonously repeated or the lexis is generic: Coletti points for example at Morante's *La storia* (1974). Coletti sees in Morante an excessive neutrality of literary language, deprived of any stylistic originality, which eventually leads, in Italian novels of the 1980s-1990s, to what has been nicknamed *lingua 'standa'* after the supermarkets brand, namely a language that offers a stereotypical and worn-out recreation of spoken Italian.⁴³

In the late 1950s-early 1960s, a very prompt reaction to the use of a *lingua media* in literature comes from the authors of New Avant-Garde. Their opposition is firstly directed towards the commodification of culture made by the emerging neo-capitalist society and then also towards the language that this

⁴⁰ Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, 'Aspetti della lingua di Calvino', in Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, *La tradizione del Novecento: terza serie* (Turin: Einaudi, 1991), pp. 227-92 (pp. 257-68); Testa, *Lo stile semplice*, pp. 284-90.

⁴¹ Mengaldo, *Storia della lingua italiana*, pp. 171-75; Testa, *Lo stile semplice*, pp. 293-95.

⁴² Testa, *Lo stile semplice*, pp. 295-97.

⁴³ Coletti, *Storia dell'italiano letterario*, pp. 362-63. As Antonelli reminds us, the debate on *lingua standa* was started by Angelo Guglielmi in an article on *Tuttolibri* (16 January 1993), to which Sandro Veronesi replied in the article 'Lingua standard o lingua standa?'. Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', p. 686. Sandro Veronesi, 'Lingua standard o lingua standa?', in Accademia degli Scrausi, *Parola di scrittore: la lingua della narrativa italiana dagli anni Settanta a oggi* (Rome: Minimum Fax, 1997), pp. 219-27 (pp. 222-23).

society is promoting through advertisement and mass media, which they see as conformist. Diverging for a moment from narrative into poetry, the preface and poetic manifesto of the anthology *I novissimi* (1961), with which the New Avant-Garde starts, reads:

Poiché tutta la lingua tende oggi a divenire una merce, non si può prendere per dati né una parola né una forma grammaticale né un solo sintagma. L'asprezza e la sobrietà, la furia analitica, lo scatto irriverente, l'uso inopinato dei mezzi del discorso, la 'prosa', insomma quello che non si è abituati a trovare nelle altre poesie e che si trova invece nelle nostre va considerato anche in questa prospettiva.⁴⁴

Language is for New Avant-Garde authors an ideologically charged tool against the consumerist society. Their syntactic fragmentations, semantic distortions, and rhythmic dissonances are aimed at provoking a sense of displacement and what they called, in Leopardi's terms, an increase in vitality (*accrescere la vitalità*) in the reader, i.e. an acknowledgement of and a reaction to conformist language, identified with *lingua media* and literary language.⁴⁵ In his novel *Capriccio italiano* (1963), Sanguineti - one of the *Novissimi* poets but also a prose writer - chooses to lower the language below the *lingua media*, recreating on the page the lowest register of spoken Italian: redundant use of *ci*, reiterated use of '*che*' *polivalente* and *cioè*, broken syntax.⁴⁶ The work embodies the theories of *Gruppo 63* on the experimental novel, which have as main point the *abbassamento linguistico*: the use of an informal spoken register of Italian, performed in a monologue by a homodiegetic first-person narrator.⁴⁷ In Sanguineti's words, 'un parlato da falsa registrazione su nastro, che si corregge e si controlla a ogni battuta in un monologo labirintico'.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Alfredo Giuliani, 'Introduzione', in *I novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, ed. by Alfredo Giuliani (Milan: Rusconi e Paolazzi, 1961), pp. XI-XXXII (p. XVI).

⁴⁵ Gianni Volpi, 'Il gruppo '63 e il problema della lingua', in *Corso di storia della lingua italiana*, ed. by Corrado Grassi (Turin: Giappichelli, 1965), pp. XXI-XXXV (p. XXVII); Corti, 'Tre "campi di tensione"', p. 132; Giuliani, 'Introduzione', p. XIX.

⁴⁶ Coletti, *Storia dell'italiano letterario*, p. 363.

⁴⁷ The notion of *abbassamento linguistico* was proposed in the 1960s by Renato Barilli, by which he meant the use of vulgar terms and jargon and a syntax that mimics that of informal spoken language. For Barilli *abbassamento linguistico* should be a fundamental feature of contemporary narrative. *Gruppo 63: il romanzo sperimentale*, Palermo 1965, ed. by Nanni Balestrini (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1966), pp. 12-13.

⁴⁸ Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', p. 689.

Similarly, a harsh polemic against *lingua media* comes in 1964 from Pasolini who - in the article *Nuove questioni linguistiche* - states that *lingua media* is the language of bourgeoisie and that works with any literary values are not written in this language, but either in a hyper-literary Italian or in dialect (or both in the case of experimental works).⁴⁹ Moreover, he puts forward an argument for the birth of *italiano tecnologico*: a new unified and national Italian born in Northern Italy with industrialization and the rise of the bourgeoisie, and now spreading also among the working class, thus leading to the disappearance of dialects. This Italian is simplified, functional, standardised and inspired by technology rather than literature: indeed, its aim is 'communicative' rather than 'expressive'.⁵⁰ Pasolini's analysis of the Italian linguistic situation produced a lively debate among intellectuals and authors, a sign that the *questione della lingua* was very much felt. Moravia, Eco, Citati, Ottieri, Arbasino, Calvino, etc. intervened with articles on newspapers expressing their ideas and opinions on language - mostly disagreeing with Pasolini. Calvino for example did not see the language of technology as harmful *per se*: if it is used to clarify and avoid generalizations, he claims, its contribution is positive; if, instead, it is used to increase the number of abstract nouns that compose the *antilingua* - the language of bureaucracy - then the result is negative.⁵¹ Moreover, linguists also reacted, judging Pasolini's position as simplistic.⁵² However, historians of Italian language now recognize that Pasolini's theories were grounded, especially concerning the increase in the use of technical-scientific lexis and phraseology in contemporary Italian from the time of the Economic Boom.⁵³

The plurality of visions is reflected also in the types of reactions to *lingua media*. Indeed, in those years the rejection of *lingua media* and traditional

⁴⁹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Nuove questioni linguistiche', in *La nuova questione della lingua*, ed. by Oronzo Parlangeli (Brescia: Paideia, 1971), pp. 79-101 (pp. 82-6) (firstly published in *Rinascita*, 26 December 1964).

⁵⁰ Pasolini, 'Nuove questioni linguistiche', p. 99.

⁵¹ Italo Calvino, 'Per ora sommersi dall'antilingua', in *La nuova questione della lingua*, pp. 173-76 (pp. 174-75).

⁵² Segre for example affirms: 'Ma se la familiarità con la ricerca linguistica permette da una parte di mostrare la debolezza di molte affermazioni di Pasolini o l'insussistenza dei suoi problemi, ammonisce dall'altra a non avanzare previsioni in un settore così intricato, soggetto a forze spesso contrastanti'. Cesare Segre, 'La nuova "questione della lingua"', in *La nuova questione della lingua*, pp. 433-45 (p. 437) (firstly published in *La Battana*, May 1966, pp. 37-48).

⁵³ Tesi, 'Una fase ancora aperta: l'italiano contemporaneo', pp. 223-25 and Claudio Marazzini, 'Le teorie', in *Storia della lingua italiana*, ed. by Luca Serianni and Pietro Trifone, 3 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1993), I: *I luoghi della codificazione*, pp. 231-334 (p. 328).

literary language is not the sole prerogative of New Avant-Garde writers: there are authors that experiment with language, without the same polemic verve of New Avant-Gardists, rather with ironic, playful, satiric, or deforming purposes.⁵⁴ There are, for example, mannerist writers, who mimic in their works the argumentative prose of seventeenth century treatises with an ironic and demystifying aim: Manganelli with *Nuovo commento* (1969), Vassalli with *Tempo di massacro* (1970). In *Nuovo commento* sentences are dilated through a process of continuous expansion of the internal members of the sentence. ‘Obstacles’ to a clear deciphering of the syntactic structure, such as discontinuous phrases and non-analytical punctuation, are constantly added, while, on the semantic level expressions such as ‘si pensa che’ connote the message as uncertain and unstable. Manganelli’s writing does not seek to guide the reader to comprehension, but aims at hindering it.⁵⁵ In *Tempo di massacro* Vassalli deforms words by moving stress (*massacro* > *massacro*) and dropping syllables (*politici* > *litici*); he combines a clear and rational language with more playful neologisms or lyrical tropes.⁵⁶

Moreover, there are writers who in different ways link back to the expressionist tradition, and open up their language to every kind of linguistic material, from the ‘lowest’ (dialect, *italiano popolare*) to the ‘highest’ (technical language, noble language). Indeed, as Cesare Segre argues, linguistic expressionism is

interferenza tra registri di diversa storia e storicità diversamente connotati, e in particolare tra quelli della lingua letteraria e della lingua d’uso, con l’intervento straniante dei linguaggi speciali: scientifico, filosofico, ecc.⁵⁷

In addition to that, the linguistic plurality of expressionist works can also include the use of dialects or foreign languages and the presence of authorial neologisms, all of them aiming at representing the heterogeneity of the diachronic and social reality of Italian language. Unlike writers in *stile semplice*

⁵⁴ Corti, ‘Tre “campi di tensioni”’, p. 131.

⁵⁵ Corti, ‘Tre “campi di tensioni”’, p. 153; Mariarosa Bricchi, ‘Note sulla sintassi di *Nuovo commento*’, *Autografo*, 45 (2011), 101-16 (107-15).

⁵⁶ Corti, ‘Tre “campi di tensioni”’, p. 161-62.

⁵⁷ Cesare Segre ‘Punto di vista, polifonia ed espressionismo nel romanzo italiano (1940-1970)’, in Cesare Segre, *Intrecci di voci: la polifonia nella letteratura del Novecento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1991), pp. 27-44 (p. 28).

- who aim at using a limited span of linguistic possibilities for communicative aims - novelists writing in *stile espressionistico* use the entire range of varieties of Italian, plus dialects and foreign languages. *Stile espressionistico* is a formal experimentation, where prominence is given to language as artificial product, and where the author assumes a parodic and deforming attitude towards the theme and the language, aiming at provoking a sense of estrangement in the reader.⁵⁸

The prime example in twentieth-century Italian literature of *stile espressionistico* is Gadda: he is the main point of comparison when talking about expressionism or in general experimentalism in post WW2 Italian narrative. Although Gadda's style is considered an *unicum* in the Italian literary landscape, it is nonetheless possible to trace a Gaddian inheritance in other writers.⁵⁹ Examples of plurilingualism and polyphony used with parodic or deforming aims are seen for example in Mastronardi's *Il calzolaio di Vigevano* (1959), Bianciardi's *La vita agra* (1962), Volponi's *Memoriale* (1962) and *La macchina mondiale* (1965). Also Arbasino's *Fratelli d'Italia* (1963) is often quoted as an example of linguistic pastiche.⁶⁰ Alongside plurilingualism, there are structural and syntactic elements that, coming from Gadda, can be traced in 1960s experimental or expressionist writings. Giuseppe Antonelli identifies for example the use of 'una sorta di monologo indifferenziato, in cui si mescolano alla narrazione brani di discorso indiretto libero e frammenti di discorso diretto inglobati senza segnalatori paragrafematici'.⁶¹ This uninterrupted discourse ('unico discorso ininterrotto') appears, as we have already seen, in Sanguineti's work, as well as in Arbasino, Mastronardi, Berto. Furthermore, from a syntactic point of view, the sentence in experimental works tends to be expanded, long, and elaborate, but mostly based on parataxis, as is the case for Manganelli,

⁵⁸ Testa, *Lo stile semplice*, pp. 4-5; Segre, 'Punto di vista, polifonia ed espressionismo nel romanzo italiano', p. 28.

⁵⁹ Gianfranco Contini, 'Espressionismo letterario', in Gianfranco Contini, *Ultimi esercizi ed elzeviri (1968-1987)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1988), pp. 41-106 (p. 100); Corti, 'Tre "campi di tensioni"', pp. 133-34.

⁶⁰ Segre, 'Punto di vista, polifonia ed espressionismo nel romanzo italiano', pp. 39-42; Rinaldo Rinaldi, *Romanzo come deformazione: autonomia ed eredità gaddiana in Mastronardi, Bianciardi, Testori, Arbasino* (Milan: Mursia, 1985), pp. 6-7.

⁶¹ Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', pp. 689-90.

Sanguineti and Volponi.⁶² Finally, punctuation often does not respect the logical-syntactic structure as in works in *stile semplice*: it can be absent, it can fragment the sentence or follow the prosody of spoken language.⁶³ Individual authors can have a preference for a specific punctuation mark, which becomes a stylistic feature of their writing or of a work: the colon for Gadda or the semi-colon for Manganelli's *Nuovo commento*.⁶⁴

The way I have presented so far the choices in terms of language and style in the novel from the end of WW2 to mid-60s stresses the multiplicity of reactions to the changes in progress in the Italian linguistic landscape. Yet, especially after the Neorealist period, it is possible to identify phenomena that - although used for different purposes - are common both to 'simple' and experimental writers and that come from the availability of a common, national and spoken Italian. The first one is the use of structures and devices typical of spoken language not only in the mimetic, but also in the diegetic parts. Dislocations, cleft sentences, redundant pronouns, '*che*' *polivalente*, and so forth enter the narrator's discourse and bring it nearer to the characters' discourse, blurring the differences between the two.⁶⁵ The second is the reduction of hypotaxis, in line with the development of contemporary Italian: the sentence is mostly based on parataxis, regardless of its length. In other words, parataxis dominates not only in sequences of short sentences, but also where there are long, convoluted and apparently complex sentences. Studies on authors that tend to 'exceed' the standard in terms of horizontal extension - such as Manganelli, Volponi, Bufalino - have shown that the average degree of subordination of their sentences is however low.⁶⁶ Another transversal aspect is the use of nominal style: we can

⁶² Antonelli talks about Gadda's *gliuommeri* and Sanguineti's *labirinti*, Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', p. 691; for Volponi see Elisabetta Mauroni, 'La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei: Morselli, Tobino, Volponi, Bufalino', *Acme*, LIII (2000), 215-61 (pp. 221-22 and 233-34).

⁶³ Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', pp. 696-99; Dardano, 'Romanzo', pp. 399-400.

⁶⁴ Elisabetta Tonani, *Punteggiatura d'autore: interpunzione e strategie tipografiche nella letteratura italiana dal Novecento a oggi* (Florence: Franco Cesati, 2012), pp. 135-40 and 168-74.

⁶⁵ Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', pp. 686-88.

⁶⁶ 'I periodi di *Hilarotragoedia* sono spesso lunghi, o lunghissimi. Ma, all'analisi, la coordinazione vince sulla subordinazione, la giustapposizione di scaglie sintattiche sulla creazione di rapporti di dipendenza' Mariarosa Bricchi, *Notizie su Hilarotragoedia* (Novara: Interlinea, 2002), p. 50. 'Bufalino ricorre nei suoi romanzi a una strutturazione sintattica complessa, impreziosita da scelte lessicali in controtendenza. [...] Ma nel complesso, la strutturazione sintattica si allinea, nonostante tutto, alle misure consuete: il freddo dato quantitativo chiarisce che il periodo di

find traditional series of adjectives or past participles at the beginning of the sentence to introduce a character or a situation; appositions at the end of the sentence to describe a place, landscape or character.⁶⁷ More innovative are predicative nominal sentences or clauses used to recreate the brachylogy of spoken language, as well as to make narration more dynamic and rapid: in these years, they start to be used in journalistic writing too.⁶⁸

Having sketched a picture of the composite linguistic and stylistic landscape of Italian narrative after WW2 until 1965, we can now ask ourselves where Arbasino could be positioned within this landscape.

1.2.1 Arbasino

Arbasino's works are commonly seen as the opposite of works in *stile semplice*, those that recreate *lingua media* for communicative purposes. He is indeed usually assigned to the 'filone espressionista', 'manierista' or 'filone sperimentale' of post-war literary language.⁶⁹ However, we know that this ideal bipartition between authors writing in *lingua media* and authors rejecting it is not always so clear-cut and that the 'simplicity' or 'complexity' of language and style can be of different degrees and present different shades from one author to the other.⁷⁰ As Antonelli underlines referring to the syntax and style of Italian narrative from the 1960s onwards:

se in rari casi le voci dei singoli scrittori possono essere raccolte in gruppi omogenei, legati da affinità di formazione, scuola, scelte stilistiche, molto più spesso queste si moltiplicano nelle

Bufalino ha i livelli d'incassatura più frequenti nel 1° o 2° grado'; Tesi, 'Una fase ancora aperta: l'italiano contemporaneo', pp. 234-35.

⁶⁷ Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', pp. 700-05; Maurizio Dardano, 'Romanzo', in *Storia dell'italiano scritto*, ed. by Giuseppe Antonelli, Matteo Motolese and Lorenzo Tomasin, 3 vols (Rome: Carocci, 2014), II: *Prosa letteraria*, pp. 359-420 (p. 396-99).

⁶⁸ Bice Mortara Garavelli, 'Fra norma e invenzione: lo stile nominale', *Studi di grammatica italiana*, 1 (1971), pp. 271-315 (pp. 272-74); Maurizio Dardano, *Il linguaggio dei giornali italiani* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1974), pp. 313-14.

⁶⁹ Coletti, *Storia dell'italiano letterario*, p. 363; Martignoni, 'Arbasino: la coerenza della complessità', p. 9; Francesca Gatta and Riccardo Tesi, *Lingua d'autore: letture linguistiche di prosatori contemporanei* (Rome: Carocci, 2000), p. 14; Corti, 'Tre "campi di tensioni"', p. 132.

⁷⁰ Mauroni, 'La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei', p. 217.

sperimentazioni e nelle disparate soluzioni espressive adottate in ogni opera.⁷¹

This difficulty in categorizing authors applies particularly well to Arbasino, who from the very beginning of his career maintained an autonomy and heterodoxy from any literary group or slants. Even when he was part of one, the *Gruppo 63*, he was considered a sort of outsider, who did not completely fit in the theory of the novel elaborated by members of the *Gruppo*, as Barilli's statement shows:

nonostante le molte ragioni che potevano indurre i membri della neoavanguardia a non lesinare la loro adesione all'opera di Arbasino, questi rimaneva un 'compagno di via', un fratello maggiore di formazione esterna, non del tutto organica ai passi del movimento nascente.⁷²

Similarly, some critics find it difficult to include Arbasino in a group or stream: Corti for example does not find a place for him in the division between 'deforming' and 'mannerist' writers she makes, promising in the future a description just devoted to him:

Arbasino, ad esempio, è a mio parere uno scrittore di vero rilievo, ma non rientra nei due filoni di sperimentalismo prescelti; richiederà un discorso del tutto a sé, complementare a quello presente.⁷³

Moreover, although Arbasino is often compared to Gadda, critics and linguists such as Rinaldo Rinaldi, Segre and recently Della Corte, have pointed out that there are important differences in the vision of the world and poetics of the two authors.⁷⁴

In view of the difficulty of placing Arbasino in any grouping, school or style, I would like here to explore his poetics and ideas on language and style in the decade 1954-1964, when his early fictional works, *Le piccole vacanze*, *Il ragazzo perduto* and *Fratelli d'Italia*, and the essay *Certi romanzi* were written and published. Given Arbasino's constant reflecting and commenting upon his

⁷¹ Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', p. 682.

⁷² Renato Barilli, *La neoavanguardia italiana: dalla nascita del Verri alla fine di Quindici* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995), p. 152.

⁷³ Corti, 'Tre "campi di tensioni"', p. 132.

⁷⁴ Rinaldi, *Romanzo come deformazione*, p. 205; Cesare Segre 'Punto di vista, polifonia ed espressionismo nel romanzo italiano', p. 42; Della Corte, *Come ombre vivaci sullo sfondo*, p. 221.

literary practice (often within the work itself), I am particularly interested in examining how he responded to the various stimuli provided by the dynamic Italian linguistic and literary situation of the time, and tracing the theoretical elaboration of his personal poetics, to which I will constantly refer in the following case studies, where I will assess (among other things) how it influenced syntactic and stylistic choices.

The short stories included in *Le piccole vacanze* and the novel *Il ragazzo perduto* are written in close succession in 1954-55, thus in pivotal years for the Italian novel: the Neorealist experience is at its end and new themes, modes of representation, linguistic issues are emerging.⁷⁵ Arbasino, although still young and at the beginning of his writing career, has already very clear stances on the previous Neorealist period and definite ideas on how literature should be. Many of these considerations are inserted in *Il ragazzo perduto*, which for this reason could be considered a manifesto-work, a work that reflects on narrative techniques and language and at the same time displays them. In particular, it is in the essayistic parts of the novel that we find the first-person narrator reflecting on the cultural and literary situation of the time. This narrator is a writer in difficulties who, through a subtle game of cross-references, can be linked to Arbasino himself. In the relevant case study I will explore more fully the games of allusions and self-reflexivity involved in this work, but it is interesting to notice from the beginning the place where Arbasino chooses to let us know about his ideas on literature, i.e. the literary work itself, which is already telling of a certain way of thinking the literary work of art.

Arbasino's position on Neorealism is one of dissatisfaction and rejection. Under the spotlight in particular is the representation of reality in Neorealist works: for Arbasino it is a naive, impressionistic and pigeonholed documentation of a given social environment (usually the lower classes), made with the intention of denouncing a social situation, and therefore charged with moralistic and

⁷⁵ The crisis of Neorealism started in the early 1950s and culminated in 1955, with the debate on Pratolini's novel *Metello*. At that time, authors who had been linked to the Neorealist period such as Calvino had already started to move away from Neorealism and look for new expressive paths. Moreover, literary magazines such as *Officina* (founded by Pasolini, Roversi and Leonetti), later on *Il Menabò* (Vittorini and Calvino's magazine) and *Il Verri* (the magazine of New Avant-Garde) were questioning the *status quo* of Italian narrative and proposing new poetics. Michael Caesar, 'The Late 1950s and the 1960s', in *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature*, ed. by Peter Brand and Lino Pertile (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 559-80.

political purposes.⁷⁶ Overall, Arbasino views Neorealism as paradoxically far from the objective chronicling it seeks:

Qui si finisce per dare il ‘giudizio’ veramente nel senso che, appena compare in scena un personaggio, l’autore deve affrettarsi a collocarlo in una categoria prefabbricata di ‘idées reçues’, con opportuna caratterizzazione; e preferibilmente caricarlo di tic e di ‘materiale plastico’ rivelatore, cosicché rappresenti meglio la classe sociale a cui appartiene.⁷⁷

Besides themes, settings and characters, the narrative techniques and language used in these works are also dissatisfying and far from reality according to Arbasino: first of all, the use of an omniscient third-person narrator means that the narrator is detached from the object of narration. Secondly, the third-person narrator is still tied to traditional literary language, which does not correspond to the reality of the language spoken by Italians (‘quella divergenza tra una lingua parlata quasi inafferrabile, e una lingua scritta falsa per definizione, intrattenuta in finzioni insensate da una pesante tradizione di retori a effetto’).⁷⁸ On the other hand, dialogue - one of the most common devices of Neorealist novels to display the characters’ discourse - is criticized as a bad copy of that of American writers, and therefore a sign of provincialism of Italian novelists.⁷⁹ Moreover, the pervasive use of dialect or *italiano popolare* in dialogues is seen as too exclusive (‘dovremo munirci di un lessico romano-italiano o napoletano-italiano, e per ogni autore ce ne vorrà uno’) and limited in vocabulary, not allowing discussion of complex situations.⁸⁰

For Arbasino this situation is in part a result of Neorealist literature being ideologically informed, subordinated to political ideals of democratic reconstruction, social equity, attention for straitened social and economic conditions, so much so that most of the attention is put on content, whereas formal aspects are discarded:

⁷⁶ In claiming this, Arbasino links back to Italian authors that before him noticed the contradiction and upheld a different realism in their works: Moravia, Gadda, and Calvino. See Maria Corti, ‘Tre campi di “tensione”’ in Maria Corti, *Il viaggio testuale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1978), pp. 19-168 (pp. 66 and 70) and Gianluca Lauta, *La scrittura di Moravia: lingua e stile dagli Indifferenti ai Racconti romani* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2005), pp. 53-4.

⁷⁷ RP, p. 463.

⁷⁸ RP, p. 380.

⁷⁹ RP, pp. 356-57.

⁸⁰ RP, p. 462.

E si arriva alle estreme conclusioni: che la critica fiancheggiatrice giudica i risultati con un metro simile: 'Nell'opera non si pone UN PROBLEMA? Com'è brutta!' Oppure: 'Vi è simpaticamente (favorevolmente, con solidarietà, comprensione, trasporto) raffigurata la figura del tranviere (della mondina, del portalettore, del metallurgico, del ferroviere)? Per ciò stesso l'opera deve dirsi riuscita'.⁸¹

Another factor is the provincialism and backwardness of Italian intellectuals and writers, focused only on internal problems and closed to the reception of new disciplines born across borders, which can open narrative to new themes and formal techniques.

This strongly negative view of Neorealism leads Arbasino to look at other literary traditions and techniques, which he considers as unbound from ideology and from any moral engagement. According to Arbasino, at the level of representation of reality literature should rather take inspiration from the European modernist tradition (Proust, Musil, Eliot, Gadda especially), which he thinks proposes a multifaceted and unstable vision of reality, in line with the latest discoveries in psychoanalysis, psychology, anthropology, philosophy.⁸² Moreover, the critique of naturalism should be performed through the use of self-reflexive devices, such as metanarration and metafiction. Although this last aspect is not explicitly outlined by Arbasino in *Il ragazzo perduto*, as it will be instead for *Fratelli d'Italia*, it is the insertion of such devices within the work of art that makes self-reflexivity apparent. Finally, the modern realism with which Arbasino wants to be connected requires the use of the first-person narrator and of the interior monologue, as well as of a recreation of the spoken language of the socio-linguistic situation represented:

Per tagliar corto con la più importante delle preoccupazioni - rendere in maniera plausibile il suono, proprio il 'rumore' della conversazione, per rappresentare la realtà che ci circonda (una cosa che riesce difficilmente, in tutta la nostra letteratura, e meno che meno nel teatro) - è indispensabile adottare l'uso della prima persona singolare. [...] Il lavoro più giusto e più difficile che si possa fare oggi con la nostra lingua è proprio quello di ricreare sulla pagina il linguaggio

⁸¹ RP, p. 463.

⁸² 'quel dono dell'ironia che permette a loro di ravvisare e a noi di riconoscere il connotato più vero del nostro tempo, che è la compenetrazione di tragedia e di farsa, indissolubili come i due aspetti di una medesima realtà', RP, p. 358.

parlato, conservandogli quella ‘naturalizza’ che lo ricollega alla società dove è stato prodotto.⁸³

With these ideas concerning modes of representation and formal aspects in literature, Arbasino clearly senses and anticipates already in 1955 the key issues of the debate on the novel that will be initiated by the New Avant-Garde, firstly on the pages of the review *Il Verri* from 1960 and then with the gatherings of *Gruppo 63*. Theorists grouping around *Il Verri* (later forming *Gruppo 63*) share with Arbasino the rejection of the naturalist novel and refer back to the modernist tradition and its representational modes: first-person narration is supported, literary language discarded, and *lingua media* is seen as conformist and rejected in favour of an informal and neglected spoken Italian. Anxious to update Italian culture, New Avant-Gardists pay much attention to new disciplines, theories and trends emerging abroad (phenomenology, Action Painting, the *nouveau roman*).⁸⁴ Naturally, also Arbasino contributes to the debate on *Il Verri*, reasserting his affiliation to the lineage of experimentalists and in particular to Gadda, for example with the article ‘I nipotini dell’ingegnere e il gatto di casa De Feo’ published on *Il Verri* in 1960.

Yet Arbasino’s models and solutions are also somewhat different from those of the New Avant-Garde orthodoxy. In the late 1950s, Arbasino had started to write *Fratelli d’Italia* and to further elaborate his critical position on the novel as a genre. This time declarations of poetics not only appear within the work, in the argumentative parts of the text, underlining once more the self-reflexivity, but also in a critical work entitled *Certi romanzi* (1964), published as a stand-alone piece a year after the publication of *Fratelli d’Italia*. *Certi romanzi* is therefore a meta-text, a reflection on the work - *Fratelli d’Italia* - by its author: again, the self-reflexive game of cross-references speaks for itself about the creative vision of the world of Arbasino. But let us talk about what is actually proposed in *Certi romanzi*. Arbasino continues his independent quest for modern ways of representing reality and for a tradition of modern novel to which he can

⁸³ RP, p. 380.

⁸⁴ To these themes are devoted three issues of *Il Verri* in 1959, 1960 and 1961. John Picchione, *The New Avant-Garde in Italy: Theoretical Debate and Poetic Practices* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 32. On the influence of *nouveau roman* on the writers of *New Avant-Garde*, see Éanna Ó Ceallacháin, ‘Making it *nouveau*: Neoavanguardia narratives and the French *nouveau roman*’, *Italian Studies*, 68, 2 (July 2013), 275-94.

reconnect. He identifies clearly in Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet* the prime example of modern realism, which he calls *realismo critico*.⁸⁵ Arbasino does not give a clear definition of what he means by *realismo critico* in *Certi romanzi*, yet it is possible to reconstruct its meaning from the passages where it is mentioned.⁸⁶ *Realismo critico* is a deconstruction and objectification of reality in order to trigger a parodic reflection on it. In other words, it is a parodic representation of reality or, as Arbasino often repeats, a 'rappresentazione-interpretazione' of reality.⁸⁷

Indeed, Arbasino shares Flaubert's view that any literary representation of reality, and reality itself (including language), is repetitive and stereotyped: it is a quotation of works already written and things already said.⁸⁸ Thus, the aim of the modern novel is to show ironically this repetitive and stereotypical nature, by mimicking (i.e. quoting) mimetic procedures: that is, by constantly raising awareness about the self-reflexive game played in the novel.⁸⁹ This is achieved

⁸⁵ 'E com'è giusto che il "jeu de massacre" del romanzo tradizionale cominci proprio quando l'autore di *Madame Bovary* ne affida il corpo ancora caldo a due esecutori testamentari finti-dissennati come Bouvard e Pécuchet, perché fra le loro manacce giudiziosamente incompetenti si spacchi da tutte le parti, si spalanchi in tutte le direzioni, a tutte le possibilità, proliferando selvaggiamente, procedendo per accumulo, disponendosi a tutti i significati probabili, senza chiudersi nessuna strada, inglobando i materiali più eterogenei...', Alberto Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, in *Romanzi e racconti*, I, 1141-1343 (p. 1181). The first critic that identified clearly Flaubert as a fundamental model for Arbasino is Della Corte. Della Corte, *Come ombre vivaci sullo sfondo*, p. 53.

⁸⁶ 'Ma intanto, rientrando a Roma agitato da contrastanti riflessioni su diverse ipotesi di "mimesi" e diverse definizioni di "realismo critico" [...]', Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, p. 1191. According to Della Corte, the expression 'realismo critico' is borrowed from Lukàcs' *Il significato attuale del realismo critico*, yet he does not explain what it means for Arbasino. Della Corte, *Come ombre vivaci sullo sfondo*, p. 60. On the face of it, Arbasino's *realismo critico* is not in fact close to what Lukàcs meant by the term. Tito Perlini, *Utopia e prospettiva in György Lukàcs* (Bari: Dedalo, 1968), p. 195.

⁸⁷ Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, pp. 1188, 1250, 1258, 1324.

⁸⁸ 'Flaubert's novels are thus organised as a huge, mobile network of citations drawn from a diffuse corpus of other texts, but which, as they enter the space of Flaubert's text, are ironically displayed as, precisely, citations, or, at a further self-reflexive move, as instances of the activity of Quotation itself'; 'Bétise [...] is a constitutive feature of utterance, in the sense that all utterance (and therefore all intelligibility) is in some way derivative or "citational", articulated from a system that is socially established and maintained by means of convention, habit and repetition', Christopher Prendergast, 'Flaubert: The Stupidity of Mimesis', in Christopher Prendergast, *The Order of Mimesis: Balzac, Stendhal, Nerval, Flaubert*, Cambridge Studies in French, 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 180-211 (pp. 185-86 and 193). It is telling that Arbasino in *Certi romanzi* reports a passage from one of Flaubert's letters where the French author argues that literature should not seek originality, rather mediocrity, through the quotation of clichés. Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, pp. 1321-22.

⁸⁹ 'The "modernist" view, as we have seen, has it that Flaubert employs the medium in order to undermine the mimetic claims of the Novel; that he deconstructs mimesis by ironically "miming" (quoting) mimetic procedures in such a way that they fall apart or are dissolved back into the social knowledge from which they derive and which they serve to legitimate.' Prendergast, 'Flaubert: The Stupidity of Mimesis', pp. 186-87.

through a variety of means, among which *mise en abyme*, quotations of passages from other works and re-use of stereotypical expressions of everyday language. *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, the model work for Arbasino, represents two copyists trying to assemble all of the knowledge of the time and being overwhelmed and defeated by it, ultimately not managing to discern priorities and hierarchies between opinions and just parroting them. By quoting real published studies and works, and showing how Bouvard and Pécuchet reduce knowledge to nothing more than a list of quotations, Flaubert parodies the encyclopaedic drive of the nineteenth century:⁹⁰

Il fascino del *Bouvard* è che significa *tutto*. I materiali a disposizione di Flaubert sono l'*intera Cultura*. Cioè l'Enciclopedia: una 'serie' indubbiamente finita. E il 'mezzo' adottato per dissacrarla è un ping-pong impeccabilmente enciclopedico fra due 'compari' volutamente gaglioffi. La sua *tecnica*: svergognare l'intero corpus delle Conoscenze Umane isolando ogni fatto dagli altri; abolendo ogni prospettiva, ogni gerarchia di valori: come appunto nelle enciclopedie o addirittura nei vocabolari [...]⁹¹

It should be pointed out that the poetics of critical realism was not born with *Fratelli d'Italia*, rather it is theorized with this novel. Indeed, in the previous works, in particular *Il ragazzo perduto*, we find self-reflexive devices and objectification of literary and everyday language, as well as references to *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, which indicate that Arbasino is already developing his *realismo critico* by the mid-1950s, even without explicitly naming it. Basically, *realismo critico* is the answer to traditional modes of representation that Arbasino tries to elaborate throughout this first part of his writing career. Still, with *Fratelli d'Italia* critical realism finds a more systematic understanding thanks to the encounter with the structuralist theories that are starting to be elaborated in these years in France and that attract Arbasino.⁹² Indeed in *Certi romanzi* Arbasino often quotes Barthes' *L'activité structuraliste* (1963) and

⁹⁰ Another Flaubert's work admired by Arbasino is the *Dictionnaire des Idées Reçues*, which parodically accumulates the commonplaces of the time. Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, pp. 1321-22.

⁹¹ Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, pp. 1204-05. Italics by Arbasino.

⁹² 'Ma poi sembra che ormai sia la Francia a sviluppare la critica più viva e intelligente della nostra epoca: alla ricerca delle costanti formali in cui si organizzano il pensiero e il linguaggio indissolubilmente nella composizione di ogni opera d'arte', Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, p. 1159. Since behind structuralism there is formalism, Arbasino also often quotes formalist tenets in *Certi romanzi* (see, for example, p. 1256).

claims that *Fratelli* is conceived in a structuralist way.⁹³ The link between Flaubertian critical realism and the technique for the analysis of cultural artefacts elaborated by Barthes lies in the concept - that both share - of reification of objects of reality, mimicked in order to display the mechanism behind them. Barthes makes the following affirmation about structuralist activity in this quotation appearing in *Certi romanzi*:

Il suo fine, riflessivo o poetico, è di ricostituire un 'oggetto', manifestando in questa ricostituzione le regole del funzionamento dell'oggetto stesso. La struttura è dunque in effetti un *simulacro* dell'oggetto, poiché l'oggetto imitato fa apparire qualcosa che resta inintelligibile nell'oggetto naturale. [...] Il simulacro è l'intelletto aggiunto all'oggetto, e questa aggiunta ha un valore antropologico, in quanto essa è l'uomo stesso, la sua storia, la sua situazione, la sua libertà e la resistenza stessa che la natura oppone al suo spirito.⁹⁴

Just as critical realism maintains, structuralist activity deconstructs, quarters, and thereby objectifies reality (*découpage*), this with a view to reconstructing it and recombining elements (*agencement*) in order to produce new meaning.⁹⁵ It is Arbasino again in *Certi romanzi* who foregrounds the connections between the two:

Qui il 'criterio conduttore' è di *ricostruire un oggetto* - che fa parte della Realtà Oggettiva - riproducendone formalisticamente l'Aspetto e metafisicamente l'Essenza e behavioristicamente le Funzioni... Questo s'intende per 'rappresentare-interpretando'. Sarà questo il nostro 'realismo critico'.⁹⁶

Therefore, with *Fratelli d'Italia* Arbasino has found the recipe for the modern novel: it is a work that reconnects with the critical realism of the first modernist writers, but achieves it through contemporary techniques, namely those associated with structuralism. The purpose of this operation in literature is not practical - moral, civil, persuasive - as already stated in *Il ragazzo perduto*, but of *divertissement*, as underlined in *Fratelli d'Italia*. Parody and irony as ultimate aim of literature are central in Arbasino as they are for Barthes and other

⁹³ Barthes, *L'activité structuraliste*, in Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, p. 1188 (the translation from French is probably by Arbasino).

⁹⁴ Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, p. 1190. Italics in original quotation.

⁹⁵ Susana Onega, 'Structuralism and narrative poetics', in *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. by Patricia Waugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 259-79 (p. 268).

⁹⁶ Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, p. 1188. Italics by Arbasino. See also p. 1250.

contemporary French intellectuals and were for Flaubert: ‘E la finalità del romanzo o del dramma dovrebbe essere prima di tutto il *divertimento* [...]. E il “divertimento” a cui sto pensando coincide poi con quel certo realismo che usa strumenti espressivi e critici tragicomici per rappresentare con violenza una realtà che è tragicomica’.⁹⁷

One of the aspects where parody and reification are concentrated in the novel is, apart from its own structure, language. The noticeable linguistic changes that happen between the writing of *Il ragazzo perduto* and *Fratelli d'Italia*, with the affirmation of *lingua media* as the language of Italians and its more and more widespread use in narrative, prompt Arbasino to emphasize increasingly the objectification of language in *Fratelli*. *Lingua media* - now the language of *media borghesia*, of mass culture and consumerism - becomes in this novel the object of reality to reify and critique, for the purposes of *divertimento*:

Cercare di consegnare il linguaggio *autre* non già aspettando nell'anticamera del patron, o agendo nell'ambito di una convenzione codificata, con tutte le Parti distribuite e tutti i Simboli a posto: ma piuttosto, appropriandosi dell'idioma della Classe Dirigente, con tutti i suoi tic più protervi, soltanto per dissacrarlo!⁹⁸

This quotation comes from Arbasino's intervention at the gathering of *Gruppo 63* on the experimental novel (1965) and shows the difference of perspective between Arbasino and New Avant-Garde orthodoxy: while the latter endorsed a ‘lowering’ of language to an informal and neglected spoken Italian (as in Sanguineti's *Capriccio italiano*, 1963), Arbasino is for a recreation of the linguistic reality of *media borghesia* and making it the object of writing, in order to show its stereotypical character and take artistic pleasure in doing so (‘soltanto per dissacrarlo!’).

This brief exploration of Arbasino's poetics has shown the author's clear decision to opt - right from the beginning of his career - for anti-naturalist strategies of

⁹⁷ FI, pp. 612-13. Italics by Arbasino. We can recall Barthes' view of the text as an object of pleasure argued in *Sade/Fourier/Loyola* (1971) and Perec's parodic and ironic display of the spell cast by the consumerist society on a young middle-class couple in *Les choses* (1965).

⁹⁸ *Gruppo 63: il romanzo sperimentale*, p. 47.

representation, and for anti-traditional structures, techniques and language, in contrast to previous literary fashion. Although he is not the only one to have a strong interest in founding in Italy a tradition of modern novelistic expression in those years, Arbasino's originality lies in having identified at a very early stage a lineage of modern authors and works as points of reference; and in his active receptiveness towards the newest trends born across borders.⁹⁹ In particular, we have seen how the dissatisfaction firstly with neorealist writing and later with works in *lingua media* transforms into the personal elaboration of a poetics - *realismo critico* - that in its final theorization combines the modernist tradition with contemporary critical theory, notably structuralism. In the following case studies one of our aims will be try to ascertain how Arbasino's poetics translates into syntactic choices in each work, and what style derives from them. Before doing so, however, some methodological clarifications need to be made.

⁹⁹ We can recall for example that there is an increase in the critical attention to Gadda's works only from the publication of *Pasticciaccio* in 1957; and that structuralists and Russian formalists were only translated into Italian and spread in the late 1960s. Emilio Manzotti, 'Carlo Emilio Gadda', in *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. by Enrico Malato, 9 vols (Milano: Il Sole 24 Ore, 2005), 9: *Il Novecento*, I: *Tra le due guerre*, pp. 611-87 (p. 679); Caesar, 'The Late 1950s and the 1960s', p. 576.

2 Corpus and Methodology

2.1 Corpus

The analysis of syntax is conducted on a corpus of 23749 words in total from the first editions of the three texts studied in this thesis, *Le piccole vacanze*, *Il ragazzo perduto* and *Fratelli d'Italia*. For each work between 4500 and 5000 words are selected from both the diegetic and the mimetic parts, where a mimetic level is available.¹ As a consequence, for *Le piccole vacanze* (from now on PV) and *Fratelli d'Italia* (FI), which have both a diegetic and a mimetic level, between 9300 and 9600 words are examined, whereas for *Il ragazzo perduto* (RP), which does not have a mimetic level, the analysis is on about 4900 words. The corpus was selected randomly, yet trying not to pick all passages from the same chapter or short story; in particular in the case of PV an equal number of words from each short story have been chosen.

The choice of selecting the corpus on the basis of the number of words and not on the number of pages - as for example Elisabetta Mauroni did in her essay 'La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei' (2000) - or number of characters - as in Paolo D'Achille's *Sintassi del parlato e tradizione scritta della lingua italiana* (1990) - was influenced by the consideration that counting words was more precise than counting pages and characters.² Indeed, pages can be of different size according to the publishing house: in my case, we can think of the small and dense pages of FI from the series *Meridiani Mondadori*, compared to the more spacious page of the *Feltrinelli's* edition of RP, sometimes half taken by footnotes. Moreover, if the criterion chosen had been the page, it would have been difficult to calculate precisely their number for mimesis, since dialogues or monologues can be intertwined on the same page with narration. Similarly, calculating the estimated number of characters as D'Achille did was an

¹ By 'diegesis' I mean the reporting or narration of events by the narrator. It is composed of the narrator's discourse or of parts in indirect, free direct or free indirect speech. By 'mimesis' I mean the direct quoting of the characters' discourse, signalled by inverted commas. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 170-73.

² Mauroni, 'La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei', p. 215; Paolo D'Achille, *Sintassi del parlato e tradizione scritta della lingua italiana: analisi di testi dalle origini al secolo XVIII* (Rome: Bonacci, 1990), pp. 32-3.

approximation that could be avoided in my case in favour of a more precise count of words, since my corpus is not as extended as his.³

Finally, I decided to count the number of words rather than the number of sentences or clauses because the three works present notable differences in the length of sentences and clauses. The following table shows the precise number of words, clauses and sentences analysed in PV, RP and FI:

Table 2-1 – No. of words, clauses and sentences analysed in PV, RP and FI

| | PV | RP | FI |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Number of words | 9556 | 4914 | 9274 |
| Number of clauses | 1738 | 828 | 1389 |
| Number of sentences | 541 (of which 533 with clauses)* | 124 (of which 123 with clauses)* | 447 (of which 432 with clauses)* |

*Sentences without clauses are nominal lists or broken sentences composed of just a prepositional phrase.

2.2 Structure of the Analysis

The analysis of the syntax of the sentence is structured following mainly the example of two studies, both published in 2000: Mauroni's already mentioned essay 'La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei' and Francesca Caputo's *Sintassi e dialogo nella narrativa di Carlo Dossi*.⁴ These studies represent the first examples of a new generation of syntactic analysis of narrative prose, using a quantitative analysis of syntax as a starting point for the identification of trends and choices.⁵ They see statistics and averages as tools that can potentiate the qualitative analysis as well as reveal elements that could otherwise remain hidden. For example, when judging the complexity of the sentence, data concerning the average degree of subordination and the

³ D'Achille, *Sintassi del parlato e tradizione scritta della lingua italiana*, p. 32.

⁴ Francesca Caputo, *Sintassi e dialogo nella narrativa di Carlo Dossi* (Florence: Accademia della Crusca, 2000).

⁵ Similarly, Sergio Bozzola in the chapter 'La sintassi del periodo' of his study on Tasso reports quantitative data in support of his analysis, yet percentages appear very rarely and tables do not appear. Sergio Bozzola, *Purità e ornamento di parole: tecnica e stile dei Dialoghi del Tasso* (Florence: Accademia della Crusca, 1999), pp. 149-204.

distribution of subordinate clauses are key in understanding how complex the sentence is in general, and not only with reference to single examples. Moreover, translating aspects such as length, composition and depth of the sentence into percentages allows one to compare texts one to the other as well as to other corpora of written or spoken Italian. Although there are still not many syntactic analyses of this type on single authors or single literary texts, hopefully an increase in such analyses will provide scholars with a good reference basis for future studies.⁶

Going back to the structure of the analysis, I will consider each work separately, creating three case studies chronologically ordered as Caputo does in her study. However, the internal organization follows Mauroni's approach: firstly, I look at more general and superficial aspects of the structure of the sentence, i.e. length and composition. Then, I explore the types of links within sentences (paratactic or hypotactic links), observing in detail syndetic and asyndetic coordination on one hand and subordination on the other hand. Subordination is further broken down into three aspects: degree of subordination, distribution of clauses in hypotactic sentences and types of subordinate clauses. Each structure or aspect is investigated both in the diegetic and in the mimetic level (where the latter is present), and in some cases the analysis is further broken down into narrative and argumentative text (always where the latter is present).⁷ Starting from the results of the quantitative analysis - given in a systematic way through tables in the text - the analysis proceeds by presenting examples from the corpus,

⁶ I can mention for example Silvia Bergamini's recently discussed doctoral thesis on the syntax of the sentence of Sciascia and Bufalino, featuring a quantitative and qualitative analysis of syntactic phenomena present in the works of these two contemporary authors. Silvia Bergamini, 'Sintassi a confronto: la narrativa di Leonardo Sciascia e di Gesualdo Bufalino 1981-91' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2015). Unfortunately, the thesis is at the moment under embargo and cannot be accessed.

⁷ 'Narrative text' is the linguistic equivalent of an event or a series of events, made with the purpose of letting someone know what has happened; while 'argumentative text' entails the selection, organization and formulation of a series of arguments made with the aim of persuading someone. Egon Werlich, *A Text Grammar of English* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1976), pp. 39-40. Letizia Lala, 'Tipi di testo', in *Enciclopedia dell'Italiano Treccani* (2011), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/tipi-di-testo_\(Enciclopedia-dell'Italiano\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/tipi-di-testo_(Enciclopedia-dell'Italiano)/), accessed 3 June 2016.

commented in their linguistic and stylistic aspects.⁸ Examples are numbered in order to facilitate cross-referencing within the case study.⁹

Each work is considered in a separate case study, yet comparative elements emerge in the analysis of the syntax of the sentence. There is a diachronic comparison, internal to Arbasino's works: data are compared to those of the previous work, when these are relevant to identify a trend. Then there is a synchronic comparison, put into place in two ways. The first one is by comparing Arbasino's data with data from other contemporary narrative works, which present either an antithetic or similar style to Arbasino's. Mauroni was a precious source of data in this sense, because she investigates both authors belonging to the *stile semplice* and authors belonging to a more expressionist, experimental or literary line, in any case exceeding the structures of *lingua media*. Her corpus, however, includes works written between the late 1960s and the late 1980s, and the temporal gap would have proved too wide, especially with regard to Arbasino's works written in the mid-1950s. Therefore, I have created my own corpus of non-Arbasinian works. The works chosen are written in the same years as Arbasino's: Pratolini's *Cronache di poveri amanti* (1947), Gadda's *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (1957) and Ginzburg's *Lessico familiare* (1963).¹⁰ Besides the temporal criterion, these works have been chosen for representing examples of Neorealist style, expressionist style, or *stile semplice*, therefore styles that are either close or distant from Arbasino's style. Moreover, where available (length of the sentence and nominal style), I refer to statistics provided by De Mauro based on data collected in his *Primo Tesoro della lingua letteraria italiana del Novecento* (from now on PTLLIN), a corpus of one hundred novels published between 1947 and 2006.¹¹

⁸ The choice of reporting tables in the text and not in the appendix – as Mauroni and Caputo do – was suggested by the degree of detail and complexity in which the analysis goes. The immediacy offered by the table I believe avoids confusion when discussing data.

⁹ Numbering starts from number 1 in each case study.

¹⁰ For each of them I analysed 1000 words for diegesis and 1000 words for mimesis (where necessary). Vasco Pratolini, *Cronache di poveri amanti*, in Vasco Pratolini, *Romanzi*, ed. by Francesco Paolo Memmo, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1993), I, 587-1019; Carlo Emilio Gadda, *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (Milan: Garzanti, 1987); Natalia Ginzburg, *Lessico familiare* (Turin: Einaudi, 1963).

¹¹ Tullio De Mauro, *Primo tesoro della lingua letteraria italiana del Novecento* (Turin-Rome: UTET/Fondazione Maria and Goffredo Bellonci onlus, 2007).

The second type of synchronic comparison involves syntactic studies conducted on corpora of written and spoken Italian. As far as written Italian is concerned, I refer to Policarpi and Rombi's article 'Tendenze nella sintassi dell'italiano contemporaneo' (2005) and to Giulio Lepschy and Laura Raponi's article 'Il movimento della norma nell'italiano contemporaneo' (1989), which provide data regarding the average number of words and the degree of subordination elaborated from a corpus of different written texts (literary, journalistic, educational, essayistic, etc.).¹² For data concerning the average number of words and degree of subordination of spoken Italian I look at Miriam Voghera's study *Sintassi e intonazione nell'italiano contemporaneo* (1992).¹³ It examines a corpus composed of five spoken situations, ranging from more informal to more formal and belonging to different genres, from the spontaneous dialogue between friends in a café to the monologue of a conference key-note lecture, whereas the level of education and provenance of the speaker is homogeneous, i.e. Roman educated people.

Finally, the analysis of the syntax of the sentence is integrated with the examination of other relevant phenomena from a syntactic and stylistic point of view: nominal style, punctuation and parenthetical clauses. For all of them I investigate the typologies found and the functions taken within the work, but mostly without the help of quantitative data. These sections are not exhaustive descriptions but explorations of the most significant devices or structures, sometimes analysed only in the diegetic level but on a corpus extended to the whole work. Also here there are diachronic and synchronic comparisons.

2.3 Tools and Definitions

In this section I will outline the 'tools', therefore the grammars, handbooks, and studies that I use as a main point of reference for the identification and definition of syntactic phenomena and of their stylistic values. I will also clarify the meaning of terms that recur in the analysis.

¹² Gianna Policarpi, Maggi Rombi, 'Tendenze nella sintassi dell'italiano contemporaneo', in *Parole e numeri: analisi quantitative dei fatti di lingua*, ed. by Tullio De Mauro and Isabella Chiari, (Rome: Aracne, 2005), pp. 139-56; Giulio Lepschy and Laura Raponi, 'Il movimento della norma nell'italiano contemporaneo', in Giulio Lepschy, *Nuovi saggi di linguistica italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989), pp. 9-24.

¹³ Miriam Voghera, *Sintassi e intonazione nell'italiano parlato* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992).

The reference grammar is Lorenzo Renzi, Gianpaolo Salvi, Anna Cardinaletti's *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione* (1988-1995).¹⁴ Having a generative framework, this study focuses on syntax, but it also includes textual, pragmatic and logical considerations. It is the primary guide not only for parsing and the classification of clauses (vols. 1 and 2), but also for other phenomena underlined during the analysis although not systematically studied, such as marked word orders, discourse markers and deictics (vol. 3). Another point of reference for the analysis of the sentence is Serianni's *Grammatica italiana* (1989), a work with a traditional structure and a historical linguistic framework.¹⁵ An additional useful resource is the *Enciclopedia dell'Italiano Treccani* directed by Raffaele Simone (2010-11), consulted in its online version.¹⁶ For the English terminology I have mostly followed the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics*.¹⁷

For nominal style I do not strictly follow one single approach, given the uncertainty that still exists in the classification of this phenomenon. I refer mainly to Bice Mortara Garavelli's article 'Fra norma e invenzione: lo stile nominale' (1971), and Giulio Herczeg's study *Lo stile nominale in italiano* (1967).¹⁸ Both explore nominal style in narrative prose. Herczeg's is the first study of nominal style in written Italian and focuses on the categorization of extended nominal appositions, a type of nominal structure with an attributive function, traditionally present in narrative prose. On the other hand, Mortara Garavelli focuses on nominal constructions with a predicative function, thus on clauses or sentences where the verbal predicate is cancelled and the predicative function is taken by a noun, adjective, non-finite form of the verb (e.g. 'Ogni tanto, un ingorgo del traffico' < 'Ogni tanto, c'è un ingorgo del traffico'; 'autostoppista messicano preso su' < 'un autostoppista messicano è stato preso su').¹⁹

¹⁴ Lorenzo Renzi, Gianpaolo Salvi, Anna Cardinaletti, *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione*, 3 vols (Bologna, Il Mulino, 1988-95).

¹⁵ Luca Serianni, *Grammatica italiana: italiano comune e lingua letteraria* (Turin: UTET, 1989).

¹⁶ Raffaele Simone, *Enciclopedia dell'italiano* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 2011).
Online version: www.treccani.it.

¹⁷ Peter Matthews, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁸ Giulio Herczeg, *Lo stile nominale in italiano* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967).

¹⁹ Up to Mortara Garavelli's study, these constructions had never been classified by grammars. Alongside nominal clauses with a predicative function, Mortara Garavelli also considers various

On the basis of these two studies, for the purpose of data collection I consider nominal constructions with a predicative function equal to clauses with verbs: this means that they are counted as clauses just as verbal clauses. In the analysis of nominal style, the following terminology is used:²⁰

- Predicative nominal clause: a clause where the verbal predicate is cancelled and the predicative function is taken by a noun, adjective, non-finite form of the verb.
- Predicative nominal sentence: a sentence composed of one or more predicative nominal clauses, on which subordinate clauses can also depend; or composed of a predicative nominal clause and an extended apposition, or list (e.g. 'Una doccia, svelta').
- Mixed sentence: a sentence composed of a verbal and nominal part, for example a predicative nominal clause and a verbal clause or a verbal clause plus an extended apposition or nominal list (e.g. 'Un'altra doccia; e subito, prima ancora di mezzogiorno, abbiamo dovuto ributtarci in strada per venire a prendere questi qui').
- Verbal sentence: a sentence composed of verbal or elliptical clauses.

On the other hand, I consider extended appositions, lists and other forms of nominal expansions of the sentence (such as nominalizations) as able to make a contribution in terms of increase of nominality in the sentence but not as clauses.

Moreover, in my categorization of nominal style I also take into account, as Dardano suggests in *Leggere i romanzi: lingua e strutture testuali da Verga e Veronesi* (2009), the position of the nominal construction and its function in the context, paying attention to which constructions constitute an aspect of

types of 'espansioni nominali', comparable to expanded appositions. Mortara Garavelli, 'Fra norma e invenzione', pp. 287-90.

²⁰ Mauroni uses this distinction in Elisabetta Mauroni, 'Tre esempi di stile nominale: Morselli, Tobino, Volponi', *Studi di grammatica italiana*, 20,(2001), 255-86.

Arbasino's style and which ones are instead more traditionally literary.²¹ With regard to this, I explore the intersections between nominal constructions used in journalistic writing and those used in Arbasino's texts (especially in FI), taking Dardano's *Il linguaggio dei giornali italiani* (1974) as a main reference.

The study of punctuation refers, for a description of the usage and functions of punctuation marks, to *Prontuario di punteggiatura* (2003) by Mortara Garavelli.²² The handbook illustrates the conventional, i.e. logical-syntactic, uses of punctuation in contemporary Italian and exemplifies them in different types of prose writing. However, it also considers the infractions, thus those deviations from the logical-syntactic use for stylistic, rhythmic or prosodic reasons which are acceptable in specific communicative situations and types of texts, such as for example literary ones. Since my analysis of punctuation focuses indeed on uses that deviate from the logical-syntactic one, I also look at studies that examined them more closely from a linguistic or stylistic perspective. For example Angela Ferrari's *Le ragioni del testo* (2003) investigates marked uses of full stop and comma in contemporary Italian, considering them from the point of view of the semantic and pragmatic functions they acquire.²³ Particularly interesting for my research are the considerations on the 'fragmenting' full stop (*punto 'frammentante'*), when full stop breaks syntax producing a clash between syntax and text, triggering new meanings; and on the informative comma (*virgola informativa*), when the comma signals the borders of informative and intonational units.²⁴ In my analysis I refer to this comma as 'prosodic comma', as Dardano does, in order to stress the link with orality.²⁵ Textual and pragmatic considerations are therefore introduced when discussing these punctuation marks.

For stylistic considerations on punctuation marks I take as example Elisabetta Tonani's *Punteggiatura d'autore* (2012), which looks at the expressive uses of

²¹ Maurizio Dardano, *Leggere i romanzi: lingua e strutture testuali da Verga e Veronesi* (Rome: Carocci, 2008), pp. 45-8. See also Mauroni, 'Tre esempi di stile nominale', pp. 259-61.

²² Bice Mortara Garavelli, *Prontuario di punteggiatura* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2012).

²³ Angela Ferrari, *Le ragioni del testo: aspetti morfosintattici e interpuntivi dell'italiano contemporaneo* (Florence: Accademia della Crusca, 2003).

²⁴ Angela Ferrari, *Le ragioni del testo: aspetti morfosintattici e interpuntivi dell'italiano contemporaneo* (Florence: Accademia della Crusca, 2003), pp. 57-73 and 143-44.

²⁵ Dardano, 'Romanzo', p. 400.

punctuation of a selection of Italian authors, both in prose and in poetry. Her work is a valuable term of comparison insofar as she programmatically privileges ‘casi letterari dalla carica formale esibita e a volte fortemente deviata rispetto allo standard linguistico-grammaticale’ where punctuation marks act as ‘attivatori - meno discreti e più potenti - di valori stilistico-espressivi’.²⁶ She looks at cases where punctuation communicates prosodic, rhythmic-melodic, poetic values as opposed to logical-syntactic ones or where there is an estranged, parodic use of punctuation. The section on Gadda is used to identify similarities in punctuation style between the two authors.

For the definition and identification of parenthetical clauses I follow Luca Cignetti’s study ‘La [pro]posizione parentetica’ (2001).²⁷ Cignetti defines a parenthetical clause firstly as a clause that can be removed without leaving the sentence incomplete; secondly, as a clause formally separated from the host sentence by parentheses, hyphens, commas, or comma and full stop; finally, as a clause whose position inside the sentence is not fixed in respect to the word, phrase or sentence to which it refers (it can be before, after or inside it). Parenthetical clauses can have a coordinating or subordinating conjunction to introduce them; or can be without conjunction, and in this case have a more autonomous syntactical statute in respect to the host sentence. In the light of this, in my analysis the former are counted as independent coordinated or subordinate clauses, while the latter as independent clauses.²⁸ Cignetti also provides a classification of the different stylistic functions of parentheticals which I take as starting point for my evaluation of the expressive values of these clauses.

Some of the works mentioned in this section are also useful references whenever issues concerning the extraction of data from the corpus and their subsequent calculation arise. For example, in identifying the sentence, which is a concept still debated by linguists. By ‘sentence’ I mean a portion of text between two strong pauses (full stop, question mark, exclamation mark) whose first letter is

²⁶ Tonani, *Punteggiatura d'autore*, p. 11.

²⁷ Luca Cignetti, ‘La [pro]posizione parentetica: criteri di riconoscimento e proprietà retorico-testuali’, *Studi di grammatica italiana*, 20 (2001), 69-125 (pp. 69-81).

²⁸ See also Ida Tucci, ‘Frase parentetiche’, in *Enciclopedia dell'italiano Treccani* (2011) <

capitalized. It follows that, as Mortara Garavelli suggests, in the cases where a question is followed by a lower-case letter, it is interpreted as part of the sentence, e.g. ‘ti sei ubriacato perché ne avevi voglia, sì o no? e la mariagiovanna te l’ho data perché me l’hai chiesta’.²⁹ However, in the case of extended portions of text where clauses are coordinated through suspension points, these are counted as one single sentence, even when the clause starts with a capitalized letter. The following example has been counted as one sentence:

Un altro sugli ‘objets trouvés’ dalla Vita del Cellini (quando gli capitavano sulla spiaggia quei legni dalle forme allusive) a quelle mostre che si fanno a Parigi e in America con gli scatoloni di vetro riempiti con residui di ‘poubelles’... e costano carissimi... e poi esplodono sugli Aubusson... con dei gas solforosi... Però nello stesso numero l’Arcangelo fa un editoriale contro tutta l’arte moderna, in favore della ‘opera chiusa’... Quindi, tutto a posto. (FI, p. 978)

Indeed, suspension points in Arbasino’s works are usually used to recreate the hesitations and pauses of spoken language. Therefore, I interpret suspension points as linking - rather than breaking - parts of a continued spoken discourse. In these situations, the new sentence starts with the new paragraph or with the new conversational turn. On the other hand, the definition of ‘sentence’ used for the quantitative analysis will not prevent me from taking a more textual perspective when discussing examples from the text, especially in cases where the full stop does not coincide with the end of the semantic content.

In the detailed analysis I will refer to specific categories of sentence lengths, which I call short, medium, medium-long, long and very long sentences. This division is inspired by the one operated by Mauroni, with some modifications.³⁰ Short sentences have between one to fifteen words; medium sentences sixteen to thirty words; medium-long sentences between thirty-one and forty-five words; long sentences between forty-six and sixty words; very long sentences are above sixty words. By ‘word’ I mean any block of letters separated by a

²⁹ ‘Se l’espressione interrogativa è o può essere integrata nella frase, sarà seguita da una parola con l’iniziale minuscola. Se invece l’interrogazione chiude una frase o un periodo, al punto interrogativo si attribuiscono gli stessi diritti del più forte tra i segni di pausa, il punto fermo’, Mortara Garavelli, *Prontuario di punteggiatura*, p. 95.

³⁰ I have added the category of medium-long and very long sentences, which in Mauroni all form one category with long sentences. Mauroni, ‘La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei’, p. 222.

blank space or apostrophe. The term ‘clause’ indicates a unit composed of at least a predicate (finite or non-finite). Also units without predicate can be considered clauses, provided that either the predicate can be recovered from the co-text (elliptical clauses) or a noun, adjective, non-finite verb, etc. assumes the predicative function (predicative nominal clauses).³¹

Finally, in some specific cases, I use the online database CoLFIS (*Corpus e Lessico di Frequenza dell’Italiano Scritto*) and the online archives of *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera* to check the occurrence of terms and phrases in written Italian and in journal articles. This is done in particular for terms suspected to be authorial formations or stereotypical expressions used in journalistic writing.

³¹ For the distinction between elliptical and predicative nominal clauses, see Mortara Garavelli, ‘Fra norma e invenzione’, pp. 273-74.

3 Case Study 1. *Le piccole vacanze* as Stylistic Laboratory

D'altra parte alla *short story* non mi sento portato.
Arbasino, *Le piccole vacanze*, p. 147

In this first case study I will analyse the syntax of the sentence of Arbasino's first published work, PV. At the time of its publication in 1957, PV was composed of five short stories, all written by a young Arbasino in the first half of the 1950s, more specifically around 1954 and 1955: *Distesa estate*; *I blue jeans non si addicono al Signor Prufrock*; *Giorgio contro Luciano*; *Luglio, Cannes*; and *Agosto, Forte dei Marmi*.¹ All stories present a young, *medio borghese* and educated protagonist and they have in common either the time of the year in which they are set, summer, or the theme of a love story that hurts the protagonists in some way. Another constant feature is the lightness with which the themes are treated, and in some cases the pathetic ending. Also the narrative technique used is uniform, with a first-person narrator present in all stories, although the narration can take different forms: a memoir, a diary, a monologue. A brief look at each short story will introduce us to the work and help us in further reflections.

Distesa, the first story written and published already in 1955 in the review *Paragone*, is an affectionate and nostalgic memoir of the last summer of WW2 spent by the protagonist as an evacuee in the countryside, in an upper class and aristocratic environment of conversations, music and language classes, tennis court and swimming pool. *Blue jeans* is the story of a lawyer told in the first person in the form of a diary. The protagonist-narrator, frustrated by his provincial life and meagre earnings, falls in love with a sensual and unscrupulous secondary school girl, Cuor di Senape. Pushed by her business advice and rejuvenated by her erotic liveliness, he embarks on a successful and rewarding career, but he becomes impotent. She breaks off the relationship and the protagonist is left alone with his desperation. *Giorgio* tells in quite an explicit way for the time of a homosexual affair during a short holiday in Barcelona.

¹ See the postface to the 1971 edition of PV: Alberto Arbasino, *Le piccole vacanze* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971), p. 257. From now on, the titles of the short stories will be abbreviated as follows: *Distesa*, *Blue jeans*, *Giorgio*, *Luglio*, *Agosto*.

Giorgio, educated and well-travelled, seduces the younger and more naive Luciano, but shortly after the holiday abandons him. Luciano, now emotionally dependant on Giorgio and compromised, decides to kill him. The narrative form chosen is that of a first-person monologue, told alternately by Giorgio or Luciano. *Luglio* tells about the journey of two friends, Alberto - the narrator - and Giuliana, to Cannes to deliver a letter from an old upper-class lady to a distant cousin of Giuliana's. The journey is spent talking about music, writing (Alberto is a writer) and the life of the upper-class people of the provincial town they both come from; in the end, the mysterious old expatriate cannot be found and they have to come back. Finally, in *Agosto*, the protagonist-narrator goes to Forte dei Marmi to see the girl he had met the previous year in Cortina. However, the interest for this girl vanishes as soon as he meets more disinhibited and sexually available girls with whom he has brief and casual liaisons.

The short synopsis introduces us to one essential element of the poetics of Arbasino in those years: namely, the distance in terms of themes, social setting and narrative techniques from those typically found in Neorealism and in general in the previous narrative season (symbolism and *realismo mitico*). As we saw in the first chapter, during the writing of PV and RP the critique of the naturalistic and ideologically oriented narrative promoted by Neorealism is relentless. Arbasino's literary preferences seek to reconnect with the first decades of the twentieth century and in particular to the modernist period and the American Jazz Age. For example, he declares Proust and Fitzgerald the main inspirational figures of PV (and so they will remain throughout his literary apprenticeship and beyond).² These authors probably influence the *medio borghese* and upper-class setting, and encourage Arbasino to reject the depiction of other classes from an outside perspective. Indeed, Proust might have also influenced the use of the first-person narration and the substantial uniformity of the discourse of both the narrator and the characters. Proustian elements may also include metanarrative reflection, for example in *Luglio*, where the protagonist is a writer and is named Alberto, like Arbasino; or the homosexual theme in *Giorgio*. From Fitzgerald

² In the postface to the 1971 edition of PV, Arbasino writes: 'Le mie cotte più vive erano Proust e Fitzgerald; però ero deciso a non lasciarle trapelare troppo immediatamente'. Arbasino, *Le piccole vacanze*, 1971, p. 257. In RP Proust's influence can be found in the homosexual theme: the two lovers meet in a flat which is allusively situated in 'via Proust'. FI has a circular ending, which recalls Proust's *Recherche*. Again in FI, Fitzgerald is quoted in chapter 1 and is the object of a conversation in chapter 4.

possibly come the references to actors, authors, directors, and actually existing places, helping to realistically depict the time and place of the short stories.³ Another declared source of inspiration is the poetry of the early twentieth century such as Eliot, Cardarelli, and Saba, from whom Arbasino quotes, more or less openly: for example, the titles *Distesa estate* and *I Blue jeans non si addicono al signor Prufrock* draw on Cardarelli and Eliot respectively.⁴ In summary, we can say that Arbasino seeks inspiration from authors who depicted a socio-linguistic reality - as he wants to do with the Lombard middle and upper-class between the end of the war and the economic boom - but with anti-naturalist forms and techniques, as his idea of realism entails.

In this case study it will be argued that the stories of PV are a laboratory where Arbasino mixes old and new, tradition and experimentation, in order to find his own way out of the narrative impasse of the 1950s. This happens at every level, thematic, formal, and stylistic. The interesting element of these short stories lies indeed in the opportunity to observe the birth of some *leitmotivs* and choices that will be consolidated in later works. For example, alongside the theme of the decadence of *alta borghesia* threatened by *piccola borghesia* found in *Distesa*, which recalls Moravia's *Indifferenti*, Arbasino also portrays a very contemporary social and cultural issue for the time, the emergence of pop culture and mass society.⁵ In *Giorgio*, *Blue jeans* and *Agosto*, the protagonists drive cars, go on holidays, go to the cinema, and meet emancipated women: all elements and status symbols that characterize this period of time, which we will find again in FI. Cinema in particular is recognized as having a powerful influence on the imaginary of the mass, with the narrator commenting on the

³ An important later indication in this sense comes from chapter 1 of FI, where the protagonists comment on Fitzgerald's quotations of authors, songs, baseball players and how this helps to recreate the time and place of the novel: 'In Fitzgerald trovi continuamente Constance Thalmadge e D.H. Lawrence, Prokoviev e *Papà Gambalunga*... continua a citare debuttanti e giocatori di baseball, canzonette dell'annata e racconti del "Saturday Evening Post"... ma vedi come in lui suonano necessari, pungenti, nel restituire proprio poeticamente l'esatto colore di un'epoca'. FI, p. 618.

⁴ Also from the postface: 'parecchia poesia "classica" è presente come sfondo vocale' and, on *Distesa*: 'Tutti i dialoghi derivano invece dal *Portrait of a Lady* di T.S. Eliot, usufruito mediante larghe citazioni testuali e abbondanti prolungamenti immaginari', Arbasino, *Le piccole vacanze*, 1971, p. 258.

⁵ The link between PV and *Gli indifferenti* is drawn by Folco Portinari in his review of the 2007 edition of the work. Folco Portinari, 'Le piccole vacanze', *L'immaginazione*, 234 (Oct-Nov 2007), 58-9 (p. 58).

behaviour of a character saying ‘L’avrà visto fare al cinema’.⁶ As we will see, cinema will play a role also in FI.

On the formal level, the still traditional, realistic structure of the short stories (linear progression of the plot, no metanarrative levels) is often accompanied by the first signs of the obsession with quotation, which will characterize Arbasino’s subsequent works, starting from RP. Alongside the use of quotations as titles and the hidden references to Proust, Fitzgerald and Eliot, there is for example the rewriting of the famous Manzonian *Addio ai monti* at the end of *Distesa*, while in *Luglio* there are direct references to authors such as Capote, James, Kafka, Porta, Savinio, Comisso. Moreover, beyond literature, also cinema is referenced.⁷ The theme of the love-story during the summer holiday in *Agosto* was for example popular in the comedies of the time: *Una domenica d’agosto* (1950) by Luciano Emmer, *Vacanze d’amore* (1955) by Jean-Paul Le Chanois, *Souvenir d’Italie* (1957) by Antonio Pietrangeli, *Vacanze a Ischia* (1957) by Mario Camerini and *Racconti d’estate* (1958) by Gianni Franciolini.⁸ Ultimately, quotation, allusion, and rewriting are the first signs of the poetics of *realismo critico*, insofar as they point to the idea that literature is the object of literary writing, and that literary discourse is a repetition of previous literary discourses: only a ‘second degree’ literature is possible.

Finally, the nature of PV as laboratory can be observed on the stylistic and linguistic level as well. Choices stand between tradition and experimentalism, and between literary language and mimesis of spoken language: the difference can be seen not only between different stories, but also within them. On a

⁶ In *Agosto*: ‘Io non ho mai conosciuto una ragazza che vada in giro seducendo gli uomini con un simile fascino, come questa, che se li prende insieme per qualche ora, veramente “l’amore di una sera”, l’avrà visto fare al cinema, e poi li pianta, lei!’ (p. 190). This sentence will become a *topos* re-used throughout Arbasino’s early works.

⁷ As Gabriele Pedullà states, cinema for Arbasino is ‘soprattutto un grande magazzino di trame e peripezie: forse addirittura l’arte che esaurisce tutte le storie e con esse la possibilità stessa di fare letteratura di primo livello, condannando definitivamente il romanziere alla riscrittura e all’allusione’. Gabriele Pedullà, ‘Cinema’, in *Alberto Arbasino*, ed. by Marco Belpoliti and Elio Grazioli, Riga, 18 (Milan: Marcos y Marcos, 2001), pp. 262-76 (p. 264).

⁸ Another evidence of the connection with Italian comedies is the name of Alberto Sordi, the protagonist of many of these films, mentioned in *Agosto* (p. 180): ‘Io però so fare molto bene la imitazione di Alberto Sordi’. Moreover, to further confirm the consonances between Italian comedies and Arbasino’s story, the protagonists of *Agosto* go to *La Capannina*, a very famous club in the 1960s in Forte dei Marmi, which years later will appear also in the comedy *Sapore di mare* (1982) by Carlo Vanzina. The film is set in the 1960s and pays homage to the comedies of those years.

common layer of *lingua media*, with some regional (Lombardy) features and substantial grammatical correctness, it is possible to find parts that get close to *prosa lirica*, featuring the use of historic past and of literary language.⁹ On the other hand, we can come across more experimental uses, and the emergence of a hint of *parlato* also in diegesis: overflowing monologues with scarce use of punctuation conveying the emotional aspect of a spoken discourse; reportage-style and cinematographic-style parts where present tense, nominal style, fragmenting punctuation dominate and get close to the brachylogy and conciseness of spoken language. Moreover, there are examples of border-crossing of direct speech into diegesis, thus passages in free direct speech or free indirect speech. These more experimental parts can be seen as the first attempts on Arbasino's part to find an alternative to Neorealism.

The main aim of this case study will be to describe the syntax of the sentence of PV and bring to light the choices that contribute to the creation of these stylistic effects. I will start by observing statistical data and then presenting examples from the text. Data will be presented in two ways: I will firstly introduce data - divided between the diegetic and mimetic levels - concerning PV as a whole, to give an idea of the direction taken by Arbasino's writing in the first half of 1950s. Then I will show data broken down for each short story, for an account of their syntactic specificity.¹⁰ Indeed what makes this first work interesting is its nature as a syntactic laboratory, where different solutions are tried, some of which are then replicated in the future works. This analysis will allow us to both show a tendency and to account for the heterogeneity found. Where available, these data will be compared to those from other corpora in order to help position the syntax of PV in the landscape of contemporary narrative and of contemporary Italian. Extracts from the text will be presented and commented, in order to verify the syntactic choices and their stylistic impact.

⁹ Some examples: inversion of the order noun-adjective: 'rustica pace', 'disumane urla', 'inaspettato incontro'. Traditional lexical choices: 'capo' instead of 'testa', and the relative pronoun 'onde'. Residues of phonetic polymorphism: the presence of the diphthong in 'giuocare' (also in mimesis) and of the monophthong in 'movevano'. Cases of literary elements in syntax will emerge during the analysis.

¹⁰ For each short story, I analysed about 1000 words in the diegetic level and 1000 words in the mimetic level (where possible, because not all short stories had as many words in mimesis).

3.1 Length and Composition of the Sentence

3.1.1 Length

The following table shows data concerning the length of the sentence for PV diegesis and mimesis:

Table 3-1 – Length PV

| | PV diegesis | PV mimesis |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Average n. of words per sentence | 20.43 | 15.35 |
| Short sentences (1-15 words) | 60.98% | 69.83% |
| Medium sentences (16-30 words) | 21.54% | 18.64% |
| Medium-long sentences (31-45 words) | 6.1% | 6.11% |
| Long sentences (46-60 words) | 4.88% | 3.05% |
| Very long sentences (over 60 words) | 6.5% | 2.37% |

A first comparison between the two levels shows that diegesis has on average longer sentences. Indeed, if we compare the percentages of short, medium, medium-long, long and very long sentences in the two levels, we can see that diegesis has a lower percentage of short sentences and a higher percentage of medium, long and very long sentences than mimesis. Not only: in diegesis percentages progressively lower from short to long sentences, then rise again slightly for very long sentences; instead in mimesis percentages always decrease from short to very long sentences. Let us collocate these data in a broader perspective and also consider how they are distributed in single short stories in diegesis and mimesis.

Diegesis

I will firstly compare the average number of words per sentence in PV diegesis with data from other corpora. For example, Policarpi and Rombi's corpus *Penelope*, collecting different examples of written Italian, says that the average length of the sentence in narrative is 17.5 words per sentence; while De Mauro's corpus of Italian literary language of twentieth century, PTLLIN, tells us that the

average length of the sentence is generally under 25.¹¹ With respect to this, then, the average of PV diegesis of 20.4 is slightly longer than the one of narrative texts, however within the limit of 25 words per sentence. As we can observe from the percentages, the PV average is the result of a very high percentage of short sentences (almost 61%), followed by medium sentences (21%); short and medium sentences are however balanced by the percentages of medium long and very long sentences (6.1% and 6.5% respectively). Why is there this contrast between short and long measure? Is there a specific function or stylistic outcome associated with different lengths?

First of all, we should clarify that we do not find in all of the short stories similar percentages of different length; on the contrary, it seems that Arbasino tries out various lengths, as we can see from the table below:

Table 3-2 – Length short stories diegesis

| | Distesa diegesis | Blue jeans diegesis | Giorgio diegesis | Luglio diegesis | Agosto diegesis |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Average n. of words per sentence | 29.41 | 13.86 | 52.95 | 25.64 | 12.48 |
| Short sentences (1-15 words) | 35.29% | 68.06% | 26.32% | 48.72% | 79.27% |
| Medium sentences (16-30 words) | 38.24% | 23.61% | 15.79% | 28.21% | 9.76% |
| Medium-long sentences (31-45 words) | 5.88% | 5.56% | 5.26% | 12.82% | 4.88% |
| Long sentences (46-60 words) | 11.76% | 1.39% | 10.53% | 5.13% | 3.66% |
| Very long sentences (over 60 words) | 8.82% | 1.39% | 42.11% | 5.13% | 2.44% |

In fact, the breakdown shows the presence of extremes: on the one hand *Blue jeans* and *Agosto* are mostly composed of short sentences and their average words per sentence is quite low (13.9 and 12.5 respectively). On the other hand, *Giorgio* has an extremely high average (52.9 words per sentence) due to the predominance of very long sentences with a high number of words. If we had to compare the average of *Giorgio* alone with that of the corpora above, our short story would be definitely distant from the average of other narrative texts. The other two short stories, *Luglio* and *Distesa*, have a more balanced profile, with a

¹¹ Polcarpi, Rombi, 'Tendenze nella sintassi dell'italiano contemporaneo', p. 150; De Mauro, PTLIN, p. 42.

prevalence of short and medium sentences but also remarkable percentages of medium-long, long and very long sentences.

Such contrasts also have visible effects on style. In *Blue jeans* and *Agosto*, the syntax appears hyper-fragmented thanks to the use of clusters of short sentences separated by full stops. Hyper-fragmentation, combined with the use of the present tense and of nominal style, conveys dryness and rapidity to the text as well as suggesting the brachylogy of spoken language. The result is the creation of a dynamic on-the-spot report:

(1) Farò un giro.

Fino al Tonfano, alle Focette; poi indietro. A dormire presto. Ho lavorato fino all'una; e poi al volante per tutto il pomeriggio. Devo essere stanco. (*Agosto*, p. 184)

Nominal style is a fundamental part of this dry and rapid report: thanks to the cancellation of the verbal predicate, indications of time and persons are omitted; therefore the situation is fixed in a timeless present and the sentence is shorter and more incisive, e.g. 'A dormire presto' as opposed to 'Vado a dormire presto'. Such features will return in FI, but will be enriched by a parodic element that here is not yet visible.

In *Giorgio*, instead, very long sentences help build up the interior monologues of the two protagonists, Giorgio and Luciano. The flow of thoughts is mimicked by very long sentences where clauses accumulate, coordinated one to the other only by weak punctuation marks (usually comma):

(2) **Io ti amo, ti amo, ti amo**, Luciano **ho perso la testa** per te, e ti supplico, lasciati voler bene e non dovrebbe costarti molto, la tua vanità maschile dovrebbe esserne lusingata, **ho perso la testa**, stabilirai tu le forme, i limiti, le condizioni, voglio fare solo quello che vuoi tu, se tu mi respingi se tu non me lo dai mi finisci, non posso vivere senza di te, questo vorrei dirgli, mi ammazzi, questo io glie lo dirò, è impossibile resistere ancora. (*Giorgio*, p. 121)

Apart from the use of a weaker punctuation than expected (e.g. 'non posso vivere senza di te, questo vorrei dirgli' where the comma appears instead of colon), the spoken and informal nature of the monologue is conveyed by epanalepsis and repetitions ('ti amo, ti amo, ti amo', 'ho perso la testa' twice), corrections ('questo vorrei dirgli [...] questo io glie lo [sic] dirò'), and the

incorporation of direct speech without quotes ('mi ammazzi'). As we will see, this type of syntactic structure recurs in RP, when Arbasino wants to mimic the sentimental confessions of the narrator.

The co-occurrence of certain syntactic structures and devices is crucial in achieving a specific stylistic outcome. For example, in *Distesa* short and nominal sentences can also be found, but because they are inserted among longer sentences and in a more traditional narration in *passato remoto*, the result is more lyrical and 'static' as compared with example 1 above - more appropriate for a memory of the past as this short story wants to be:

- (3) Tre anni. La casa fu presto occupata da nuovi ospiti, perché tutti gli appartamenti erano dati in affitto, divenne un rifugio, si riempì. Anche i contadini cedettero qualche stanza. (*Distesa*, p. 10)

In other texts, however, narration in the present tense will soon replace that in *passato remoto*, either justified by the use of genres such as the epistolary, the diary as in *Blue jeans* and RP or simply through the use of narrative forms such as the interior monologue or on-the-spot narration where the narrator(s) talk about what is happening in that moment, as in *Giorgio*, *Agosto* or FI.

Another function of short and medium sentences, present throughout the corpus (even in *Giorgio*), is to express the emotions and questioning of the narrator. They are usually exclamations and direct questions reported without quotes, therefore pointing to the presence of free direct speech:

- (4) Mai più potrò tenerla legata: una volta sì e due no, una sì e tre no, e avanti di questo passo, è finita per me. Anche oggi la resa è stata sotto il normale. Più niente da fare. E se almeno lei fosse sincera, ma è sincera, che prove ho, su che cosa mi baso, perché devo sempre spiarla? (*Blue jeans* p. 94)
- (5) Quale delle due sorelle è più intelligente e più in gamba? Questione grossa, tuttora da risolvere. (*Luglio*, p. 147)

Similarly, long and very long sentences appear in all short stories, although with a different frequency. We have seen the confession-type in *Giorgio*; but long sentences can also be used for descriptions. One interesting form of description is the list, performed both through appositions in series (enumerative

apposition), a traditional feature of narrative, or through chaotic inventory of objects, which is instead more typical of expressionist writers, as the following in *Agosto*:

- (6) Insostenibile!! Marina si fa viva di colpo, è come un proiettile caduto sulla sabbia fra noi, gambe incrociate, olio di noce, merenda, oggetti vari sparsi, mi ricordo che esiste, come una accensione di tanti razzi mi assalgono di ritorno fatti e parole precise di ieri sera, e niente è più reale, e netto, niente mi importa più. (*Agosto*, p. 186)

The sentence expresses a sudden emotion (indeed it is preceded by an exclamation with two exclamation marks ‘Insostenibile!!’): the syntax is very lean and sequential, with nouns and clauses juxtaposed through comma. Part of it actually takes the form of a list of things (‘gambe incrociate, olio di noce, merenda, oggetti vari sparsi’): in this case the emotional burst is translated into a visual sequence, as if logical thinking was impeded for some time. This way of structuring long sentences, namely a sequence of clauses or a list of objects, based on parataxis, either emotional or visual, will characterize also Arbasino’s following works: we will encounter many ‘confessions’ of the type of example 2 in RP, while the syntactic and rhetoric device of the list of objects will become more and more central as Arbasino progresses on his stylistic quest, in particular in FI. Moreover, it is worth adding that very long sentences with a more experimental syntax are also present in those short stories that up to here I presented as traditional: even in more syntactically traditional texts Arbasino inserts experimental elements.

Mimesis

As we have observed in table 3-1, sentences in mimesis have an average number of words of 15.3. Percentages show that short sentences clearly prevail with 69.8%, followed by medium sentences with 18.6%; then the trend is the longer the sentence, the lower the percentage. The main difference from diegetic level is therefore the increase in short sentences to the detriment of all of the other lengths: a difference that does not surprise us, since there is usually a simplification of syntax in the mimetic level of narrative works, due to the intention of giving an illusion of verisimilitude by recreating the quick and concise nature of spoken discourses.

However, this simplification does not seem to be in line with spoken language in real situations: the comparison with corpora such as Voghera's (1992) and Emanuela Cresti's (2000) shows that the average number of words per sentence of PV is closer to that of monologues held in public and controlled situations, such as university lectures, than to monologues and dialogues in private and informal situations, as the ones in PV.¹² We might therefore infer from the initially summary data on PV as a whole that Arbasino uses longer sentences than real spoken situations. In summary, although the mimetic level appears simpler than the diegetic one, it seems that Arbasino still maintains sentences quite long, and indeed very long sentences in PV mimesis are 2.4%. Yet, as in the case of diegesis, the distribution of different lengths varies according to each short story:

Table 3-3 – Length short stories mimesis

| | Distesa mimesis | Blue jeans mimesis | Giorgio mimesis | Luglio mimesis | Agosto mimesis |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Average n. of words per sentence | 14.83 | 10.3 | 53.35 | 13.06 | 10.6 |
| Short sentences (1-15 words) | 67.92% | 84.85% | 29.41% | 69.79% | 79.07% |
| Medium sentences (16-30 words) | 17.92% | 6.06% | 23.53% | 22.92% | 18.6% |
| Medium-long sentences (31-45 words) | 7.55% | 6.06% | 29.41% | 3.13% | 0 |
| Long sentences (46-60 words) | 4.72% | 3.03% | 0 | 3.13% | 0 |
| Very long sentences (over 60 words) | 1.89% | 0 | 17.65% | 1.04% | 2.33% |

The differences among the short stories reflect those found in the diegetic level. Just by looking at the average number of words per sentence, we can see that *Blue jeans* and *Agosto* have the lowest average; *Distesa* and *Luglio* follow, although this time they are very close to the previous group; finally comes *Giorgio*, with an extremely high average. *Giorgio's* average is clearly exceptional and heavily influences the overall datum, more than it does for diegesis: taking

¹² In Voghera's corpus, the average number of words of PV is close to that of a university lecture (15.9 words per sentence), thus of a monologue held in a public and controlled situation; Voghera, *Sintassi e intonazione dell'italiano parlato*, p. 185. In Cresti's corpus our datum is close to that of monologues in public and controlled situations (16.11 words per utterance); Emanuela Cresti, *Corpus di italiano parlato*, 2 vols (Florence: Accademia della Crusca, 2000), I, 243-44.

Giorgio out of the calculation, the overall average of words per sentence would be lower (13 instead of 15.3 words per sentence).

In general, all short stories tend to increase the use of short sentences in mimesis when compared to diegesis. Also medium sentences are well represented, while other lengths tend to drop considerably (apart from *Giorgio's* case), although the presence of very long sentences in four stories out of five is noteworthy. These shifts reflect the use of different genres of direct speech in the short stories. For example, in *Distesa*, *Luglio*, *Blue jeans* and *Agosto* the genre mostly used is the quotation within the narration: the words of only one of the interlocutors are quoted between inverted commas, while those of the other interlocutor (usually the narrator) are in indirect speech, free direct speech or simply not present. Quotations are usually short sentences:

- (7) **'Che cosa fanno di sera, di giorno?'** tornò a chiedere con lieve insofferenza. **'Si trovano nelle ville, giocano, ricevono, la sua mamma che cosa fa di bello?'**, ma portandole io tutti i saluti dietro incarico la mamma ha chiesto: **'Chi? la cocorita del trenino?'**, e infatti il profilo del naso della signora Campoli richiama subito l'idea del becco [...]
(*Distesa*, p. 24)
- (8) Ma ritorna continuamente sul discorso di prima: **'Vedi'** mi dice con una sua piccola smorfia ostinata; **'tu dovresti spiegarmi ancora...'**, e dice che sì, effettivamente guadagno troppo poco. **'Potresti fare molto di più'** sostiene, e si informa sulle mie prospettive future. (*Blue jeans*, p. 73)

In these examples, direct speech is reduced mostly to short direct questions, exclamations, lapidary affirmations or even interrupted sentences, where some hints of the recreation of spoken language are given by the use of discourse markers ('Vedi') but on the other hand elements such as the interrogative 'che cosa' still point to the use of traditional standard Italian.¹³ The narrator's control over other characters' discourse is strong, as we can see from the indications of the way of the utterance that accompany the verbs introducing direct speech (*verba dicendi*): 'tornò a chiedere con lieve insofferenza', 'Ma ritorna continuamente sul discorso di prima'. Also, the narrator can decide to report half of a character's discourse in direct speech and the other half in indirect

¹³ Sabatini, 'L'italiano dell'uso medio', p. 165.

speech, or even interrupt his/her discourse, as in example 8, with obvious implications on length as well.

The use of quotations and the authorial control over the characters' discourse show that we are quite far from a purely mimetic representation of the characters' discourse. As we said in the first chapter, Arbasino openly stands against the documentary style used in Neorealist dialogues; he supports instead a recreation of spoken language in both the discourse of the narrator and of the characters (not always successful as we have seen above in the case of *che cosa*).¹⁴ Consequently, Arbasino avoids dialogues in PV or, when he uses them, they are typographically embedded in narration:

- (9) [...] e come venivano giù dai monti l'avvocatone Canepa chiedeva 'li hai portati i soldi?', 'mah, signor avvocato...' restava lì il villano; 'quanto hai in tasca?' chiedeva l'avvocato 'prima fammeli vedere!' gridava 'fila a casa a prenderli!'; e d'altra parte non sentivo che un gran parlare [...] (*Blue jeans*, p. 47)

Again Arbasino prefers short sentences, in the form of direct questions, exclamations, interrupted sentences. Here we can observe more clearly the use of devices of spoken language such as dislocations ('li hai portati i soldi?'), discourse markers ('Mah'), and the use of colloquial lexis ('filare').

A more experimental choice can be found in some parts of *Agosto*: quotations of pieces of café society conversation, where the speaker is not specified and can be any member of the group, mix with narration and free direct speech. Everything is written in the same rapid and incisive nominal style made of short sentences that characterizes this on-the-spot narration:

- (10) Le tre e mezza. 'Facciamo una sorpresa nella villa del Malaparte? Io ho lasciato la vespa in giardino'.
'Vuoi un pullover? È umido'.
Si va a dormire.
Sandra, allora domani mattina alle undici, in spiaggia, a sinistra della Capannina. Buona notte. (*Agosto*, p. 194)

¹⁴ The dialogue, according to Corti, 'risulta la macrostruttura formale portante dei romanzi e racconti neorealistici, il segnale della "non finzione"'; Corti, 'Tre "campi di tensioni"', p. 79. For the use of dialogue in Neorealist novels see also Vittorio Coletti, "'Con voce più alta e stizzosa': osservazioni su discorso diretto e dialogo nel romanzo', in Vittorio Coletti, *Italiano d'autore: saggi di lingua e letteratura del Novecento* (Genoa: Marietti, 1989), pp. 43-55 (p. 51).

In this case the narrator seems to 'lose control' and the narration looks more like a collage of different quotations; the polyphony takes over the author's voice. We can say it is the way Arbasino tries a more mimetic recreation of spoken interactions, but alternative to the Neorealist one. These are also the first examples of a technique that Arbasino will use later on in some parts of FI, mixing together different forms of reported speech.

In *Giorgio* the prevailing genre is instead the monologue. Spoken monologues are usually longer than dialogues because they are not interactive, interactivity being an element that limits length.¹⁵ Monologues in this short story are however excessive, overflowing, a stream of words that tries to convey the morbid obsessiveness of the protagonist's discourse, focussed on persuading his 'prey' Luciano to surrender to him:

- (11) Vorrei dirgli 'Luciano io vorrei fare qualche cosa per te, qualunque cosa, vorrei aiutarti anche se non te ne importa, indirizzarti, dare uno scopo alla tua vita, darti consigli di cui tu sentissi il bisogno, vorrei introdurti, farti conoscere gente che ti possa servire, portarti in giro con me... **vedi**, sarà questione di temperamento, e il mio vedi è un carattere un po' speciale, te l'ho già detto, sai, io né fumo né gioco né mi do molto da fare, dopo tutto, e in genere gli altri li lascio perdere, non mi va di bazzicarli quindi non mi faccio mai vedere, ma mi piace molto coltivare le amicizie vere, mi piace stare insieme e parlare, mi piace più di tutto, e allora in quei pochissimi casi sento veramente l'amicizia, e mi impegno, se vedo qualcuno che mi va non lo trascuro più e prendo cotte, faccio avances... portando più avanti la tua teoria del colpo di fulmine'. (*Giorgio*, pp. 116-17)

One of the protagonists, *Giorgio*, is quoting himself, saying what he would like to tell Luciano (and maybe he cannot tell for social conventions?): thus, reported speech is just a continuation of the interior monologue of diegetic parts. Indeed, the border between the diegetic and mimetic levels in this short story is totally blurred. Syntactically this is shown by the similar average of words per sentence in diegesis and mimesis, by a similar architecture of the sentence - cumulative parataxis and textual conjunctions that keep the text cohesive, here underlined - and, in general, by the informal and spoken attitude that characterizes both levels (e.g., use of discourse markers, in bold, and of colloquial terms such as *bazzicare*, *prendere cotte*, etc.). Probably, the 'continued' monologue is a

¹⁵ Voghera, *Sintassi e intonazione nell'italiano parlato*, p. 186.

technique used to avoid dialogues and the despised linguistic distance between narrator (in third person) and characters found in Neorealist novels: the short story has two narrators and two protagonists - Giorgio and Luciano - who never engage in a dialogue but alternately speak in first person and quote only themselves. This is an extreme way to merge the diegetic and mimetic levels; in the other short stories Arbasino does this by making sure the narrator and the characters belong to roughly the same social class (middle and upper class), so that there is not much linguistic difference.

In the mimetic level of other short stories, we can also find long quotations. In the case of *Distesa* and *Luglio*, the topic is frivolous, consisting in gossip, an invective against the emerging middle-class or the old and soon disappearing generation of upper-class people. As in the case of short quotations, the interaction through dialogue is avoided: thus, while the words of one of the interlocutors are in direct speech, those of the other interlocutor (usually the narrator) are in free direct speech or not present.

3.1.2 Composition of the Sentence

We can now examine another aspect of the general structure of the sentence, that is, its composition in terms of number of clauses:

Table 3-4 – Composition PV

| | PV diegesis | PV mimesis |
|---|-------------|------------|
| Average no. of clauses per sentence | 3.56 | 3.01 |
| % of single-clause sentences | 40.17% | 45.58% |
| % of two-clause sentences | 16.74% | 17.01% |
| % of three-clause sentences | 11.72% | 11.22% |
| % of sentences with more than 3 clauses | 31.38% | 26.19% |

The table shows that in diegesis there is an average of 3.6 clauses per sentence, which makes the average sentence a multiple-clause one, i.e. with more than 3 clauses. The average is just slightly above that of narrative texts, 3, as measured by Policarpi and Rombi in their corpus *Penelope*.¹⁶ Looking at

¹⁶ Policarpi, Rombi, 'Tendenze nella sintassi dell'italiano contemporaneo', p. 144.

percentages, single-clause sentences are the most frequent, with 40.2%, the second most frequent are multiple-clause sentences, with 31.4%. Therefore, instead of having a constant and smooth lowering of the percentages as the number of clauses increases, here we have a contrast, two extremes - the simplest and the most elaborated in the range - having the two highest frequencies.

Similarly, on the mimetic level, the average number of clauses per sentence is 3, with a higher percentage of single-clause sentences than diegesis (45.6%); yet, multiple-clause sentences still come second (26.2%). I am underlining this because this choice can already tell us something about Arbasino's style: namely that he likes to maintain a certain degree of elaboration in his work, which does not necessarily mean syntactic complexity in terms of subordination (see next section), but more an interest in contrasting structures of the sentence and in experimenting with them. Indeed the average number of clauses per sentence in mimetic parts exceeds that of a university lecture in real spoken situation: Voghera reports 2.7 clauses per sentence for this typology of spoken discourse.¹⁷ Arbasino's choice of a more elaborate structure of the sentence can be dictated by the need to test different strategies from Neorealist works. Let us take a more detailed look at the composition of the sentence in each short story, both in diegesis and mimesis.

Diegesis

Table 3-5 – Composition short stories diegesis

| | Distesa diegesis | Blue jeans diegesis | Giorgio diegesis | Luglio diegesis | Agosto diegesis |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Average no. of clauses per sentence | 4.5 | 2.94 | 9 | 3.1 | 2.38 |
| % of single-clause sentences | 32.35% | 39.44% | 15.79% | 35.29% | 51.85% |
| % of two-clause sentences | 14.71% | 14.08% | 5.26% | 17.65% | 22.22% |
| % of three-clause sentences | 8.82% | 15.49% | 5.26% | 14.71% | 9.88% |
| % of sentences with more than 3 clauses | 44.12% | 30.99% | 73.68% | 32.35% | 16.05% |

¹⁷ Voghera, *Sintassi e intonazione nell'italiano parlato*, p. 197.

Agosto is the only story to have the majority of single-clause sentences followed by two-clause sentences and is therefore the simplest. Then come *Blue jeans* and *Luglio* with a relative majority of single-clause followed by multiple-clause sentences. *Distesa* has a relative majority of multiple-clause followed by single-clause sentences. Finally, *Giorgio* has a majority of multiple-clause sentences followed, with a wide gap, by single-clause sentences: the average number of clauses is indeed very high, 9. Basically, the composition of the sentence (like its length) is adapted and at the same time contributes to the specific genre the short stories fall into; for example, the quick on-the-spot report in *Blue jeans*:

- (12) Già Natale? Mancano cinque giorni, io neanche ci pensavo. È destino che Cuor di Senape debba sempre partire all'improvviso. Stamattina, sua telefonata in fretta, il padre venuto a prenderla, tre giorni d'anticipo, neanche aspettato che si chiudessero le scuole, oggi quindi non si faceva niente, auguri, ci scriviamo. (*Blue jeans*, p. 95)

In this passage the multiple-clause sentence is among single-clause and two-clause sentences, and adheres perfectly to the quick and dynamic style of what precedes: it only has seven clauses. Compared to the number of clauses we can find in *Giorgio*'s sentences, it is not too long. Most of the clauses are in nominal style and paratactically linked through comma, conveying the same impression of condensation and rapidity (the exclamation 'auguri' is even deprived of the exclamation mark in order not to interrupt the rapid rhythm generated). Moreover, a spoken attitude surfaces with the prosodic comma in 'Stamattina, sua telefonata in fretta' and in the blend of indirect speech ('il padre venuto a prenderla') and free indirect or direct speech ('auguri, ci scriviamo').

If we compare this passage with one from *Giorgio*, example 2 above or example 22 below, we can appreciate the difference in the number of clauses they can have: while in *Blue jeans* they have usually four or five clauses, and maximum nine or eleven clauses, in *Giorgio* they have between ten and eleven clauses, maximum twenty-two clauses. The much longer and richer sentences of *Giorgio*, with clauses loosely added one to the other, help the construction of the overflowing monologue.

Other short stories, like *Distesa* and *Luglio*, have normally a less marked composition of the sentence, with a more varied presence of different compositions and lengths:

- (13) Non c'erano a B*** né il papà né l'architetto; così quella sera ho accompagnato io a casa la mamma. 'Ma che cosa ha di speciale quella cocoritina?' mi chiese lungo la salita, però mi sono accorto che le interessava ben poco. L'orologio fermo sulla Casa Lunga sembrava fosforescente sotto la luna. Erano partiti gli ebrei, partiti altri amici, ben pochi sfollati erano rimasti e della casa andavamo finalmente riprendendo possesso, a puntate. (*Distesa* p. 32)

In this passage the structure of the sentences is regular and not very elaborate, with individual sentences consisting of one, two, three, at most four clauses. We do not find syntactic breaks either in the direction of fragmentation or of cumulative expansion. Every sentence is semantically concluded and within a regular range of length and number of clauses, so that the prose appears static. However, the signs of syntactic breaks and of a more experimental style can be seen in these short stories as well: in *Distesa* we find some long lists, with up to thirty clauses, the first examples of a soon-to-be very frequently used stylistic feature in Arbasino's following works. Also in *Luglio* there are more experimental parts, characterized by nominal lists, deictics, pluriligualism, with an overall reportage and cinematographic effect, which again will be widely used in FI. Therefore, as previously stated in the section on length, each short story can contain a more experimental section.

Fragmentation and broken sentences can be found throughout PV, in *Agosto* and *Blue jeans* as well as in *Distesa* and *Luglio*, even though with different frequency and in a different syntactic landscape, contributing to convey a dynamic effect to the page. In *Agosto* broken sentences are part of the generally fragmented style, where sentences are broken down into smaller units, clauses or even phrases isolated by full stops:

- (14) Decidersi. Far conoscenza. A mente fredda. Gli inizi turbano sempre la serenità del giudizio. E per impostare 'tutto il mio avvenire' non è mai troppa la circospezione. Ma dopo qualche mese le passioni sedimentano. La riflessione prevale. L'occhio più spassionato. Si valuta. E quale occasione migliore? (*Agosto*, p. 183)

Again, the result is of a very ‘dry’ writing, obtained by combining fragmentation and nominal style (‘Decidersi’ ‘Far conoscenza’ ‘L’occhio più spassionato’). The presence of free direct speech with marks of informality, namely the direct question starting with a discourse marker (‘E quale occasione migliore?’) connotes the passage as an interior monologue.

In *Luglio* we find a sequence of broken sentences preceded by a quite extended sentence, one of the parts where the syntax appears more dynamic in this otherwise mostly syntactically flat short story:

- (15) Come Giuliana aveva previsto finimmo per non muoverci più di lì, bisognava perdere troppo tempo cercando un altro alloggio, spendere altro denaro in supplementi; e del resto subito la prima mattina prestissimo ci toccò di alzarci e correre al battello per l’escursione alle rocce rosse, tornammo tardi dopo il picnic e il bagno, quindi il tempo ci era totalmente mancato, anzi tornammo troppo tardi, era già quasi ora di cena e dovemmo prendere un tassì per arrivare fino alla villa di Carlo Altoviti. Ma senza trovarci nessuno. Abbiamo suonato e risuonato; niente. E neanche dopo cena. Allora siamo andati a Juan-les-Pins. (*Luglio*, p. 157)

As we can notice, the first sentence of the passage is long and paratactically articulated. Clauses are added and connected to the previous clause through comma or the conjunction *e*, to which textual conjunctions (*quindi*, *anzi*) are added to keep the long sentence cohesive.¹⁸ Then a series of short and broken sentences follow, starting with a conjunction that clearly points to the connection with the previous sentence.

¹⁸ I use the term suggested by the Sabatini-Coletti dictionary to refer to these connectives (*però*, *tuttavia*, *infatti*, *quindi*, *perciò*, *dunque*, *così*, etc.) that are not coordinating conjunctions as such (*e*, *ma*, *o*, etc.) but have an anaphoric function within the text. Sabatini-Coletti, s.v. *congiunzione*. See also Adriano Colombo, *La coordinazione* (Rome: Carocci, 2012), pp. 57-60.

Mimesis

Table 3-6 – Composition short stories mimesis

| | Distesa mimesis | Blue jeans mimesis | Giorgio mimesis | Luglio mimesis | Agosto mimesis |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Average no. of clauses per sentence | 2.88 | 2.15 | 10.35 | 2.46 | 2.28 |
| % of single-clause sentences | 44.76% | 57.58% | 5.88% | 45.83% | 53.49% |
| % of two-clause sentences | 16.19% | 15.15% | 17.65% | 19.79% | 13.95% |
| % of three-clause sentences | 7.62% | 6.06% | 17.65% | 13.54% | 16.28% |
| % of sentences with more than 3 clauses | 31.43% | 21.21% | 58.82% | 20.83% | 16.28% |

The table shows that *Blue jeans* and *Agosto* have the highest percentage of single-clause sentences, and are the simpler in terms of composition. *Luglio* and *Distesa* have fewer single-clause sentences and more two-clause or multiple-clause sentences. All four have similar averages (between 2.1 and 2.9 clauses per sentence), while *Giorgio* plays again the role of the odd one out: 10.3 clauses per sentence on average, with 58.8% of multiple-clause sentences and only 5.9% of single-clause. *Blue jeans*, *Agosto*, *Luglio* and *Distesa* tend to use fewer clauses per sentence when compared to diegesis, whereas *Giorgio* uses more. Surely, for *Distesa*, *Blue jeans*, *Luglio* and *Agosto* the practice of quoting direct speech within narration influenced data, since these are mostly single-clause sentences. Also dialogues can have many single-clause sentences, especially when the pattern includes questions and answers, and the exchange is rapid:

- (16) Giuliana sta trionfando come se avesse tutto previsto.
 ‘Ma anche stavolta ho una lettera da recapitare a Cannes’
 ‘Di Pea anche questa?’
 ‘Stavolta no’. Ha l’asso nella manica? Mi guarda come un intenditore di spumanti farebbe con un povero tapino mangiatore di yogurt. ‘È per Carlo Altoviti, cioè un vero personaggio di James’.
 ‘Ma non è morto?’
 ‘Anch’io credevo. È stato uno dei protagonisti della belle époque, ed era già allora piuttosto decrepito. Sai che è mio cugino lontano lontano?’
 ‘Sapevo che era parente di parenti di parenti dei Luzzatti, ma se ne parlava tanto di rado, e come se fosse veramente morto da anni. È nato nei nostri paesi, non lo sapevi? Fin da giovanissimo lo chiamavano tutti *el barunén*’. (*Luglio*, pp. 148-49)

This is one of the few dialogues not typographically embedded in the narration, possibly because it involves more than just a few lines; it also exceptionally does not report any *verba dicendi* and is mostly without indications from the narrator. There is therefore a more mimetic aim here, but without repetition of *dire* or similar neutral verbs after each dialogue line as in most Neorealist dialogues, something that Arbasino, so careful about rhythm and sound in writing, had labelled as an irritating *birignao*.¹⁹ Here we can observe devices that mimic real spoken situations such as nominal questions ('Di Pea anche stavolta?'), elliptical replies ('Anch'io credevo'), discourse markers ('Ma non è morto?'), proclauses ('Stavolta no'). However, we can say this is still a very cautious recreation of spontaneous dialogues, when compared to the dialogues we will find in FI, which include a much more mobile language, with interruptions, false starts, marked word orders, deictics. Moreover, we can perceive a difference in the register of narration, which appears more formal than the language of dialogues, as the inversion in the first line shows: 'come se avesse tutto previsto'. Therefore, the homogenization of the narrator's and character's language that Arbasino theorizes is not always successful, although the choice of having a first-person narrator involved in the story and belonging to the same social class as the other characters helps mitigate this aspect.

Sentences with higher number of clauses are found in monologues or long quotations. In particular, in monologues there is a high variation in the composition of the sentence: usually single or two-clause sentences are denotative, describe or explain something and anticipate sentences with a high number of clauses, which have a more emotional content. It can happen that a character in his/her monologue quotes other characters (direct speech within direct speech), thus expanding the monologue. In the following example from *Distesa* an upper-class lady, Signora Campoli, is talking to the narrator about

¹⁹ 'E infatti la più intensa scrittura realistica elimina addirittura tutti (o quasi) i commenti, limitandosi a recuperarne l'istanza mimetica dentro l'arco dei *verba dicendi*, dei verbi introduttivi o conclusivi di citazione', and 'In Vittorini come in Pavese, Fenoglio e tanti altri autori anche più recenti, la riduzione della gamma dei *verba dicendi* è funzionale al disegno di una scrittura fortemente parlata e di un parlato molto "riferito" [...] per cui può succedere che lo stesso pressoché neutro "disse" sia ulteriormente degradato a una secca funzione segnaletica di d.d., come le virgolette', Coletti, 'Con voce più alta e stizzosa', pp. 51-2. The famous invective against Neorealist dialogue is contained in RP, as explained in the introduction to that case study.

piccola borghesia attempts to reach *alta borghesia* standards. Her discourse is spangled with quotations of middle-class ladies talking to their maids:

- (17) ‘Piccola, piccola piccola borghesia, non hanno biancheria di ricambio decente e devono rimandare una operazione chirurgica per farsi una camicia da notte in fretta e furia, e fermano in strada le domestiche altrui: “Quanto le dà la sua padrona, io le do di più, venga da me, si troverà bene” e poi quando il colpo è riuscito “eh, di’ un po’, di’ un po’, la curano, la curano la tavola quelli là, e che mobilio hanno, è vero che non vanno tanto d’accordo fra marito e moglie, di’ la verità, non vanno d’accordo, eh, perché non lo vuoi dire, ma lo so lo stesso”, poche, poche care, vecchie sicure amicizie affezionate, e basta’ (*Distesa*, p. 28)

We can notice in passing the use of a livelier and realistic recreation of spoken language in the direct speech of middle-class ladies - with discourse markers (‘eh’), dislocations (‘la curano la tavola’), deictics (‘quelli là’) - compared to the composed and slightly rhetorical invective of the upper-class lady.

The analysis of the more superficial and immediately visible aspects of the syntax of the sentence of PV - its length and composition - has already revealed some interesting elements. These can be summarized as the use of a variety of structures, sometimes contrasting, among short stories or even within the same short story that contribute to achieving different stylistic outcomes. On the diegetic level, we have seen how the use of clusters of short and single-clause sentences helps, together with fragmentation and nominal style, the reportage style of *Agosto* and *Blue jeans*. In *Giorgio* long and very long sentences with a high number of clauses mimic overflowing emotions. In *Distesa* and *Luglio* regular alternation of length and composition, combined with a narration in *passato remoto*, conveys the impression of a static and flat syntax. However, these two short stories can include passages with a more dynamic or experimental syntax. Different styles and syntactic choices - what we called the nature of PV as laboratory - reflect also on data concerning length and composition. In general, PV diegesis is in line with the averages of other contemporary literary texts, yet when we look at data for each single short story we realise how distant they can be one from the other. *Giorgio* for example significantly exceeds the standard as a result of its extremely long interior

monologues; whereas *Agosto* remains below, with its short sentences and hyper-fragmented style.

On the mimetic level, dialogues are avoided because they recall Neorealist practices; rather, quotations of the characters' discourse are incorporated within the narrator's discourse, with the attempt to make the two appear uniform, one uninterrupted discourse. Hence, the use of contrasting structures according to the short story as in diegesis: short lines or long monologues, sometimes a mix of the two. This is also mirrored in data, which register only a slight simplification with respect to the diegetic parts of PV, going beyond the limits of spoken language in real informal situations - especially in the short story *Giorgio*, where between the diegetic and the mimetic level there is practically no syntactic difference. In all short stories, the homogenization of the two levels is reached not only from a syntactic point of view, but also by choosing the same variety of Italian, an informal middle-class Italian, with some typical spoken devices. However, both the recreation of spoken language and the homogenization are not always successful: elements of traditional standard Italian still persist, the recreation of spontaneous dialogues is cautious, and in some cases the linguistic register of the narrator appears higher than that of the characters. On the other hand, though, the solution of using free indirect and free direct speech together with direct speech (in *Agosto* and *Blue jeans*) to mimic the chaos of voices stands out as a successful way of merging the diegetic and mimetic levels, as an alternative to dialogues.

Let us now descend from the general profile of sentences to the nature of the links between the clauses that compose them.

3.2 Syntactic Links inside the Sentence: Coordination and Subordination

In this section, we will be looking at the way clauses are articulated within sentences: whether they tend to a more linear, horizontal development, and therefore are based on parataxis; or whether they aim at reaching some level of complexity, with subordinates embedded, and therefore tend to a hypotactic and convoluted profile.

As a first approach to coordination and subordination, let us take a look at the percentages of paratactic, hypotactic and single-clause sentences in PV diegesis and mimesis, specifying that by ‘paratactic sentence’ I mean a sentence without subordinate clauses and by ‘hypotactic sentence’ I mean a sentence with at least one subordinate clause:

Table 3-7 – Syntactic links PV

| | PV diegesis | PV mimesis |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| % of paratactic sentences | 16.74% | 9.18% |
| % of hypotactic sentences | 45.61% | 45.92% |
| % of single-clause sentences | 37.66% | 44.9% |

Both diegesis and mimesis have a relative majority of hypotactic sentences, closely followed by single-clause and finally paratactic sentences. The percentage of hypotactic sentences is similar in the two levels, while there are differences concerning single-clause and paratactic sentences: in mimesis the former have a higher percentage and the latter have a lower percentage than in diegesis. Overall, sentences in both levels seem characterized by linearity, given the absolute majority of single-clause and paratactic sentences together over hypotactic ones. Yet, we will need to examine the complexity of hypotactic sentences (degree of subordination, distribution of subordinate clauses and their typology) to express a final judgment.

As in the previous section, we can look at data for diegesis and mimesis broken down for each short story. The following table concerns diegesis:

Table 3-8 – Syntactic links short stories diegesis

| | Distesa diegesis | Blue jeans diegesis | Giorgio diegesis | Luglio diegesis | Agosto diegesis |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| % of paratactic sentences | 17.65% | 19.72% | 5.26% | 8.33% | 20.99% |
| % of hypotactic sentences | 52.94% | 40.85% | 78.95% | 58.33% | 32.1% |
| % of single-clause sentences | 29.41% | 39.44% | 15.79% | 33.33% | 46.91% |

The table shows a situation where four short stories out of five have a higher percentage of hypotactic sentences followed by single-clause sentences and

finally by paratactic sentences, as in the general data. However, there are two extremes that cannot go unnoticed: *Giorgio* on the one hand, with a very high percentage of hypotactic sentences and very low percentages of single-clause and paratactic sentences when compared to other short stories. *Agosto* on the other hand, with the highest percentages of single-clause sentences and paratactic sentences, and the lowest of hypotactic sentences. From these data it seems that *Agosto* is the short story that tends the most towards a simple and linear construction, while *Giorgio* tends towards a more complex structure, although the actual complexity of these hypotactic sentences needs to be further clarified. All of the other stories lay between these two extremes, with *Blue jeans* closer to *Agosto*; and *Luglio* and *Distesa* with an absolute majority of hypotactic sentences like *Giorgio*, but without reaching its peak.

We can now check the mimetic level of each short story:

Table 3-9 – Syntactic links short stories mimesis

| | Distesa mimesis | Blue jeans mimesis | Giorgio mimesis | Luglio mimesis | Agosto mimesis |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| % of paratactic sentences | 9.52% | 9.09% | 5.88% | 7.29% | 13.95% |
| % of hypotactic sentences | 46.67% | 33.33% | 88.24% | 47.92% | 32.56% |
| % of single-clause sentences | 43.81% | 57.58% | 5.88% | 44.79% | 53.49% |

The comparison with the diegetic level shows that there is a general lowering of the percentages of hypotactic and paratactic sentences and increasing of single-clause sentences. This happens in particular in *Distesa*, *Blue jeans*, *Luglio* and partly *Agosto*, and is very possibly influenced by the fact that the mimetic level in these short stories is mostly composed of quotations or short dialogues, that can often be made of just one sentence. *Giorgio*, instead, mostly maintains the proportions that we have found in diegesis, namely a very high percentage of hypotactic sentences (here even higher than in diegesis) and a much lower percentage of single-clause sentences. This is because also the mimetic level is composed of monologues constructed with long sentences, where subordinates make their appearance. These data underline once more the effort to maintain the two levels - diegetic and mimetic - similar in *Giorgio*.

If we look at data on their own, *Agosto* and *Blue jeans* appear as the simplest and most linear because they have the lowest percentage of hypotactic sentences. *Distesa* and *Luglio* follow with a syntactic structure that seems more complex. Last comes *Giorgio*, showing its clear predilection for long and hypotactic sentences. However, as noted above, the real complexity needs to be confirmed by criteria such as degree of subordination and distribution of subordinate clauses.

With these preliminary reflections in mind we can now take a closer look first at coordinating links and then at subordinating links in the short stories.

3.2.1 Syndetic and Asyndetic Coordination

In this sub-section I will explore the nature of coordinating links within sentences. Coordination can happen in paratactic as well as in hypotactic sentences and between independent or subordinate clauses; it can be asyndetic (i.e. performed through punctuation marks) or syndetic (through conjunctions). Through the analysis of coordinating links I aim at uncovering patterns and bringing to surface uses that can give rise to certain stylistic effects in diegesis and in mimesis.

Diegesis

As shown in the table 3-7 above, in PV diegesis paratactic sentences are present with a noticeable percentage, 16.7%, the highest of Arbasino's early works, as we will see in the next case studies. Indeed, table 3-8 shows that three stories out of five have between 17% and 21% of paratactic sentences. This, combined with the high percentage of single-clause sentences, again the highest among the works studied, indicates already that this work tends towards a rather linear and simple structure of the sentence on the whole.

Paratactic sentences throughout the corpus are composed of up to five clauses and mostly linked by comma. The stylistic effect can however vary among the short stories. In *Distesa* and *Luglio*, within the context of a narration in the past, with traditional literary lexis and inversions of the word order still used, parataxis through comma contributes to communicating the tone of

remembrance and nostalgia (especially in *Distesa*) without quickening the narration, rather giving the sentence a regular rhythm:

- (18) Erano partiti gli ebrei, partiti altri amici, ben pochi sfollati erano rimasti e della casa andavamo finalmente riprendendo possesso, a puntate. (*Distesa*, p. 32)
- (19) Ora Giuliana aveva affrontato un nuovo argomento, mi parlava di Letizia, e parlava con criteri sistematici, da elefantessa paziente. (*Luglio*, p. 151)

The two sentences have a similar structure, with one or two clauses coordinated by comma and the last clause coordinated by the conjunction *e*; in both sentences this last clause also presents a complement separated by another comma ('a puntate' 'da elefantessa paziente'), which further underlines the added complement and slows down the rhythm. Moreover, an impression of stasis and a lyrical tone is conveyed by the anaphora of the verbal predicate ('Erano **partiti** gli ebrei, **partiti** altri amici' 'mi **parlava** di Letizia, e **parlava**'). There is no series of actions developing in these sentences, no dynamism: each clause adds a detail to a rather static scene. In particular, the sense of stasis is strong in example 19, where the three clauses are about the same action: the verb phrase *affrontare un nuovo argomento* in the first clause is basically a synonym of *parlare* present in the following two clauses.

On the other hand, in other short stories paratactic sentences work together with nominal style and fragmentation to create a lean and dynamic effect. In *Agosto*, paratactic clauses enhance the informal and spoken character of narration: coordination favours a more agile and immediate conveyance of the message, in passages that feature also free direct speech and fragmented sentences. Similarly, in *Blue jeans* paratactic sentences alternate with short, single-clause and sometimes nominal ones to convey the on-the-spot, informal account of the protagonist:

- (20) Questa ginnastica preparatoria della boxe fa miracoli: bene al fiato, bene alle spalle, i fianchi si stanno sistemando. L'ho presa di punta. La pelle e il torace: vanno bene. Salto la corda, tiro qualche colpo. Alla fine, raggi ultravioletti. Ogni tanto mi scotto. (*Blue jeans*, p. 93)

The syntax appears here fundamentally brachilogic, reduced to essential: verbal predicates are cancelled when not needed, either by ellipsis ('bene al fiato,

bene alle spalle’) or by nominal style (‘Alla fine, raggi ultravioletti’). On textual level, full stops fragment and isolate clauses, juxtaposing them one to the other and obliterating possible subordinating relationships (‘Alla fine, raggi ultravioletti. Ogni tanto mi scotto’ > ‘Alla fine, raggi ultravioletti che ogni tanto mi scottano’). The passage indeed does not include any subordination; it relies on parataxis or juxtaposition. We can additionally observe the fragmenting use of the colon in ‘La pelle e il torace: vanno bene’ and the prosodic use of the comma in ‘Alla fine, raggi ultravioletti’. Although they will be better explored in the section on punctuation, these uses complete the picture of a way of writing already projected towards the breaking of standard logical-syntactic rules, perched between tradition and innovation.

We may now take a look at coordination within hypotactic sentences. As in paratactic sentences, here coordination can accomplish different functions: rhythmic, loose accumulation of clauses, cinematographic fragmentation. An example of the latter is in *Distesa*, in contrast with the more traditional syntactic profile we are used to seeing in this story:

- (21) Mira vicino a noi; Mira contro il cielo bianco; Mira biondissima fra i papaveri e il grano; Mira cacciata di classe, colpevole di ‘solidarietà nel male’, cioè di non aver studiato, secondo gli accordi comuni, una dose di lezione eccessiva; Mira in fuga davanti ai piccioni disturbati mentre covavano; a cavallo; pastora d’oche; vendemmiatrice; a fianco del radiogrammofono, girando per interi pomeriggi il disco di *Auprès de ma blonde* e noi due cantavamo a gran voce, ma spesso una compagnia più numerosa, incerta fra il poker e Monopoli, insisteva per immortalare ben altre esecuzioni, allora, necessario preliminare, il piano a coda veniva laboriosamente smosso e collocato, staccati gli apparecchi elettrici della casa, e dopo le prove più convincenti cominciava la seduta d’incisione, poi gli immancabili imprevisti, sicché, rovinato il disco in ogni caso, chiunque era libero di scatenare gli istinti alla fine, e il fratellino di Mira “provava i bicchieri infrangibili”. (*Distesa*, p. 10)

The first part of this long sentence is characterized by short and nominal clauses juxtaposed one to the other through semicolon, with an overall fragmented and dry effect. The repetition of the same construction (subject+predicative complement, e.g. ‘Mira vicino a noi’) and the absence of verbal predicates enhance the visual element of the passage and allow us to perceive it as a sequence of self-contained short scenes or even cinematographic shots.

Following this fragmented part there is a more flowing one (from ‘a fianco del radiogrammofono’) which features mostly independent clauses that add one to the other loosely coordinated by comma and, in some cases, by comma+conjunction. The impression indeed is of no great syntactic accuracy, closer to a spoken rather than written rendering of discourse, given the repeated uses of the conjunction *e* or textual conjunctions (*allora*, *poi*) which keep the sentence open to the addition of more clauses. For example, in ‘(Mira) a fianco del radiogrammofono, girando per interi pomeriggi il disco di *Auprès de ma blonde e noi due cantavamo* a gran voce’ the sudden passage to a first person plural subject as well as to a verbal style in the clause ‘e noi due cantavamo’ appears slightly incoherent: a full stop and the start of a new sentence instead of the conjunction *e* would have avoided this feeling.

Speaking of loose coordination, we can take a look at the very long sentences present in *Giorgio*. In the following example, the repeated use of commas and the conjunction *e* allows clauses to accumulate paratactically, recreating a non-programmed, spontaneous spoken discourse that flows rapidly:

- (22) Stamattina ci siamo alzati con un sole stupendo e un’aria però non troppo calda, Giorgio era l’amico allegro e gentile di sempre, abbiamo scorrazzato per tutto il giorno in macchina per parchi e avenide larghe e lunghissime di splendidi palazzi, e poi in giro a piedi per il quartiere vecchio, per vicoli e cattedrali, e su e giù per funicolari, Giorgio che la conosce bene mi ha fatto vedere tutte le magnifiche cose della città, e io sempre più vedo e mi accorgo che è un amico buono, caro, sincero e insostituibile, senza un pensiero nascosto o un secondo fine interessato al mondo, e non so proprio come ho fatto a immaginare quella roba, è il migliore amico che ho, il migliore che si possa desiderare, gli voglio un gran bene. (*Giorgio*, p. 122)

The sentence is long and hypotactic, with one hundred and thirty-three words, eighteen clauses, six of which subordinates. Yet what prevails is its linear structure, based on the coordination of independent clauses plus, in some cases, subordinates depending on them: indeed, the degree of subordination is only 2. Commas and ‘cumulative’ *e* highlight the linear progression. Moreover, commas are used ‘loosely’ instead of stronger punctuation marks to keep the sentence open to the accumulation of clauses and in this way contribute to the running style we perceive when reading the sentence (e.g. ‘e su e giù per funicolari,

Giorgio che la conosce bene mi ha fatto vedere’ > ‘e su e giù per funicolari. Giorgio, che la conosce bene, mi ha fatto vedere’).²⁰

Often in these overflowing monologues the conjunction *e* combines with the textual conjunction *così* to form a recurrent pattern expressing a consequence: ‘il figlio che corre non può dormire [...], e così si è fatto fare sul tetto del palazzo una stanza che ha le pareti e il soffitto interamente di vetro’ (*Giorgio*); ‘il conte Bergonzoli inventava storie a sua moglie, e così poi la signora Campoli andava a dormire sospirando’ (*Distesa*). Alternatively, we can find only *così*: ‘e di là può vedere il cielo e le stelle, così dorme tranquillo’ (*Giorgio*). The repetition of the same conjunctions adds a feel of informality and spoken nonchalance.

Mimesis

Let us explore coordinating links in the mimetic level as well. In mimesis paratactic sentences are not as widespread as in diegesis; they tend to appear in passages that present some level of fragmentation, for example close to short and single-clause sentences, juxtaposed one to the other through full stops. The aim is probably maintaining the passage as linear and simple as possible, and often coordination is performed through comma.

Paratactic sentences are also found in *Agosto*, especially in the parts that we labelled as more experimental, with high fragmentation, nominal style, mixing of voices. Here quotations or small dialogues appear like flashes, fragments of discourse intercepted by the narrator and reported:

(23) Dicevano ‘questi vanno avanti fino a domani mattina, usciamo’. A molti tavoli giocavano a carte. ‘Usciamo fino a Viareggio’. (*Agosto*, p. 193)

Punctuation is weaker than expected: a colon would express better than the comma the consequential link in ‘questi vanno avanti fino a domani mattina: usciamo’. The link is kept loose to give a feel of carelessness and informality.

²⁰ In Italian, linguists refer to this phenomenon as ‘paratassi accumulativa’ or ‘sintassi additiva’. Antonelli, ‘Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana’, p. 690; Voghera, ‘Lingua parlata’.

In hypotactic sentences, coordination is instead stressed and made more visible by combining asyndeton and conjunctions or adverbs, as it happens in diegesis. Thus, the linear progression of the sentence is underlined. Also subordinate clauses can be linked with the same technique. In this example from *Luglio*, counting six subordinates and one independent clause, linearity is maintained by coordinating together four of the subordinates (so that the overall degree of subordination is just 2):

- (24) 'È proprietaria di numerosi immobili vecchissimi e cadenti a Milano, quei casoni del Porta dove ogni famiglia ha una sola stanza, viene l'esattore ogni due mesi a riscuotere la pigione, e si mette in cortile con il cappello in mano, così tutti sfilano a depositare i soldi dentro il cappello.' (*Luglio*, p. 152)

Syntactic links become feebler as the sentence progresses. Subordinating conjunctions disappear and are replaced by textual conjunctions that keep clauses cohesive but obliterate subordinating links. The proposed restructuring below will clarify this aspect:

- (25) quei casoni del Porta (1) dove ogni famiglia ha una sola stanza, (2) (dove) viene l'esattore ogni due mesi a riscuotere la pigione, (3) **il quale** si mette in cortile con il cappello in mano, (4) **di modo che** tutti sfilano a depositare i soldi dentro il cappello

While the first and second clauses are relative clauses depending from the same noun phrase ('quei casoni del Porta'), the third would be a relative clause subordinate - and not coordinate - to the second clause, depending from the noun 'l'esattore'. The fourth clause would be a consecutive clause (*consecutiva libera*), again subordinate and not coordinate to clause 3. Instead of this structure, which entails more levels of embedding and therefore is more complex as well as stricter in syntactic terms, Arbasino prefers a more linear construction using textual conjunctions. Interestingly, we can notice the use of the same pattern found in diegesis, where conjunction *così* introduces the last of a series of coordinated clauses: 'e si mette in cortile con il cappello in mano, così tutti sfilano'. The use of loose syntax and of similar patterns surely helps the diegetic and the mimetic level to become uniform.

Other examples of clauses loosely coordinated are in *Giorgio*, where sentences are long and include a very high number of clauses. As was the case for diegesis,

the syntactic actualization of the monologue is made by using weak punctuation marks (for example replacing question marks with commas, full stops with commas, etc.), conjunctions and textual conjunctions:

- (26) 'Tu sta calmo, penso io a tenerli lontani, ma smettila con le parole grosse, con i programmi di odii e rotture e tutte quelle balle lì, io capisco il tuo stato d'animo e ammetto subito che tutta la faccenda non è stata né molto brillante né molto pulita, però non avevo altro mezzo e rifletti bene, nessuno lo sa né immagina niente, io sono logicamente l'ultimo al mondo, nel mio stesso interesse, da cui lo si può venire a sapere, e il tuo interesse qual è, ti conviene tacere e far finta di niente, del resto che cosa ci perdi, io di te sono innamorato come un pazzo, sono qui a tua disposizione, pronto a fare tutto quello che vuoi tu, vuoi vedermi o non vuoi vedermi, dopo tutto certe risorse io le ho, quello che è mio è anche tuo, non capita tutti i giorni di trovare uno come me pronto ai tuoi piedi come uno schiavo a ubbidirti; e infine io non ti ho mica costretto con la forza, ti sei ubriacato perché ne avevi voglia sì o no? e la mariagiovanna te l'ho data perché me l'hai chiesta, a fumarla non ti ho obbligato io, l'hai fatto perché l'hai voluto, e anche per il resto è inutile farmi adesso l'indignato o lo scandalizzato, non mi respingevi certo stanotte, anzi mi sembrava che ci provassi un certo gusto, e poi non stare a drammatizzare tanto, ti farà male per qualche giorno... ma poi passa...' (*Giorgio*, p. 129)

Alongside giving an impression of a flow of words, with its parts loosely linked together, asyndeta and conjunctions paratactically connect clauses and blocks of clauses. Indeed, the entire sentence counts thirty-two independent clauses and eighteen subordinates with just a second degree of subordination, which testifies to the linearity of the passage. This loose coordination gives an impression of casual informality close to spoken language, supported, at micro-syntactic level, by dislocations (e.g. 'certe risorse io le ho') and inversions of word order for pragmatic reasons ('a fumarla non ti ho obbligato io'). Furthermore, the impression of orality is improved by the presence of the reinforcing adverb *lì* in 'tutte quelle balle lì' or negations with *mica*, underlining the Northern provenance of the speaker. We can additionally observe the informal lexis or even terms from jargon, e.g. 'balle' and 'mariagiovanna'. However, since also *Giorgio* belongs to the *media borghesia*, grammar remains substantially correct: there are not typical syntactic devices of spoken language such as *che polivalente* or *ci attualizzante*. Also in this respect, the monologues of mimesis are very similar to those of diegesis.

3.2.2 Subordination

So far we have seen that in hypotactic sentences Arbasino tries to maintain linearity through the coordination of clusters of independent+subordinates; clusters that in many cases are loosely linked together to recreate spoken informality. In order to ascertain with certainty whether these sentences are complex or not, we will need now to analyse subordination, in particular the degree of subordination, the distribution and the types of subordinate clauses.

3.2.2.1 Degree of Subordination

The first aspect of subordination to be examined is the degree of subordination. It is an important element insofar as it tells us about the depth of the sentence, and therefore about its complexity. The following table shows the maximum and average degree of subordination, as well as the percentages for each degree of subordination in PV diegesis and mimesis:

Table 3-10 – Degree of subordination PV

| | PV diegesis | PV mimesis |
|--|-------------|------------|
| Max degree of subordination | 4 | 5 |
| Average degree of subordination | 1.53 | 1.4 |
| % of hypotactic sentences with 1 st degree of subordination | 59.81% | 67.16% |
| % with 2 nd degree | 29.91% | 28.36% |
| % with 3 rd degree | 7.48% | 2.99% |
| % with 4 th degree | 2.8% | 0.75% |
| % with 5 th degree | 0 | 0.75% |

The first important datum to acknowledge is that sentences with a first degree of subordination are the majority in both diegesis and mimesis. Together with sentences reaching a second degree of subordination, they form 89.7% and 95.5% of the total in diegesis and mimesis respectively. Thus, a very high percentage of hypotactic sentences in PV do not have more than a second degree of subordination: this already means that, generally, hypotactic sentences are not very deep and complex. This is reflected well in the average degree of subordination, which is only 1.5 in diegesis and 1.4 in mimesis, while the

maximum degree of subordination (4 in diegesis and 5 in mimesis) is represented with very low percentages, especially in mimesis.

If we compare diegesis to mimesis, we can see that the latter appears slightly simpler than the former: although the maximum degree of subordination is higher in mimesis than in diegesis, the average degree of subordination is lower in mimesis. Moreover, both diegesis and mimesis are lower than the average degree of subordination of contemporary Italian, 2. Therefore, data tell us that overall PV tends towards simplicity, mimesis slightly more than diegesis.

Diegesis

We can now see more in detail the situation of each short story and comment on some examples, starting from diegesis:

Table 3-11 – Degree of subordination short stories diegesis

| | Distesa diegesis | Blue jeans diegesis | Giorgio diegesis | Luglio diegesis | Agosto diegesis |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Max degree of sub | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Average degree of sub | 1.61 | 1.41 | 2 | 1.63 | 1.27 |
| % with 1 st degree | 61.11% | 62.07% | 33.33% | 57.89% | 73.08% |
| % with 2 nd degree | 22.22% | 34.48% | 40% | 26.32% | 26.92% |
| % with 3 rd degree | 11.11% | 3.45% | 20% | 10.53% | 0 |
| % with 4 th degree | 5.56% | 0 | 6.67% | 5.26% | 0 |

We can say that also the degree of subordination confirms what has become clearer and clearer about the syntactic architecture of each story: *Agosto* is the simplest short story in syntactic terms. *Blue jeans* follows, then *Distesa* and *Luglio*. Finally comes *Giorgio*, which, although presenting the same maximum degree of subordination as *Distesa* and *Luglio*, has the highest average degree, 2. The average degree of subordination of *Giorgio* is due to a lower percentage of first degree and a higher percentage of second, third and fourth degree of subordination in comparison with the other stories. However, the average once again remains within the range of contemporary Italian. If we think that *Giorgio* is made mostly of long, hypotactic sentences with many clauses, having this kind of average is quite telling of a linear tendency.

Indeed, in the examples seen so far from the diegetic parts of this short story, we noticed how extended and elaborate in terms of length and number of clauses sentences can be, but also their fundamentally paratactic organization, where blocks of independent+subordinates clauses are coordinated one to the other. Example 22, analysed in the section on coordination, is one hundred and thirty-three words long, with eighteen clauses, twelve of which independents and six subordinates; yet the degree of subordination is just 2, thanks to the use of the linear structure described. In other words, *Giorgio's* sentences are extended horizontally but do not develop vertically, i.e. the structure of the sentence does not normally present many levels of embedding.

Similarly, in the other short stories, when the number of words and clauses increases, the level of embedding is kept low by coordinating clusters formed by independent clause+subordinates, and by coordinating subordinates. Let us take a closer look at these procedures:

- (27) Del resto nei preclusi irraggiungibili paradisi delle ville si giuocava egualmente a carte, si sentivano dischi, si prendeva il ghiaccio dalla ghiacciaia, la mamma faceva chiacchiere con amici, la contessa Bonamici tormentava la figlia e il genero con l'accusa **di averle tirato un sasso quattro anni prima in giardino per toglierla di mezzo vendere la vigna e andare a abitare a Roma**, il colonnellone andava a letto presto **a sognare il concorso ippico e la giuria di cui avrebbe fatto parte**, sua figlia preparava per la notte i cani e il suonatore di chitarra, Mira non so **che facesse**, forse leggeva o dormiva o forse non faceva nulla, il conte Bergonzoli inventava storie a sua moglie, e **così poi** la signora Campoli andava **sospirando a dormire** (il bambino c'era già), e da discorsi **fatti** io immagino **che pensasse che in fondo i soldi non contano gran che e si vale per quello che si è e non per quello che si ha.** (*Distesa*, pp. 32-33)

This is an example from *Distesa*, counting one hundred and sixty-two words, thirty-one clauses, fifteen of which independent and sixteen subordinate, but only a third degree of subordination. As we can see from my underlining, the 'skeleton' of the sentence is made of independent clauses coordinated one to the other by asyndeton and conjunctions in a linear progression. Some independent clauses have subordinate clauses (in bold) depending on them, forming a small 'cluster' that reaches some levels of depth. However, the cluster is self-contained and, once it is over, the sentence goes back to 'level zero' of embedding, i.e. the level of independent clauses. We can imagine the structure of the sentence as a horizontal line that in some cases bends vertically

and then becomes horizontal again. This type of structure is typical of contemporary Italian, which prefers the coordination of clauses to their subordination, as explained in the first chapter.

Indeed, in this example we find also coordination between subordinates, as in ‘con l’accusa di averle tirato un sasso quattro anni prima in giardino **per toglierla di mezzo vendere la vigna e andare a abitare a Roma**’, where there are five subordinates but only a third degree of subordination, because the three final clauses are coordinated. Likewise, in ‘io immagino che pensasse **che in fondo i soldi non contano gran che e si vale per quello che si è e non per quello che si ha**’ there are five subordinates, three of which coordinated. The linear and paratactic structure simplifies and lightens the long sentence, which presents loose syntactic connections towards the end, of the type we already encountered in other examples (textual conjunctions and cumulative *e*) conveying in this way a flavour of *parlato*. If the syntax of long hypotactic sentences is oriented towards spoken values, on the other hand we can still find on the lexical level remnants of literary Italian such as *egualmente* and the form with diphthong *giuocare*.²¹

Most of the sentences with a third and fourth degree of subordination present a similar outline: they are long sentences where parataxis prevails. There are however a few short sentences with a degree of subordination higher than two, where there is one independent clause and three or four subordinates, all embedded one into the other:

- (28) Noi crediamo **che fossero le sue frequentazioni di Montecarlo a dare origine alla chiacchiera che il vecchio signore fosse diventato ballettomane, e intimo di Diaghileff e di De Basil.** (*Luglio*, p. 150)

This sentence is made of three subordinates (in bold) and one independent, and has a third degree of subordination. Yet, since the types of subordinates chosen are among the most common ones (noun and relative clauses) the impression also in this case is that the syntax tends towards *lingua media* and gets close to the spoken pole rather than the written one. This is confirmed as well by the

²¹ GDLI, s.v. *ugualmente* and *giocare*.

presence of a cleft sentence ('che fossero le sue frequentazioni [...] a dare origine'), a type of segmentation typical of spoken language.

Mimesis

The following is the table concerning subordination in the mimetic level of the five short stories:

Table 3-12 – Degree of subordination short stories mimesis

| | Distesa mimesis | Blue jeans mimesis | Giorgio mimesis | Luglio mimesis | Agosto mimesis |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Max degree of sub | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Average degree of sub | 1.35 | 1.2 | 1.8 | 1.41 | 1.21 |
| % with 1 st degree | 69.39% | 80% | 60% | 60.87% | 78.57% |
| % with 2 nd degree | 26.53% | 20% | 20% | 36.96% | 21.43% |
| % with 3 rd degree | 4.08% | 0 | 6.67% | 2.17% | 0 |
| % with 4 th degree | 0 | 0 | 6.67% | 0 | 0 |
| % with 5 th degree | 0 | 0 | 6.67% | 0 | 0 |

The slight simplification with respect to the diegetic level that we mentioned above is visible also in the breakdown: in all short stories sentences with a first degree of subordination increase their percentage (in *Giorgio* they become the majority). As the degrees of subordination increase, the percentages lower and after the third degree only *Giorgio* still presents data. This is mirrored in the average degrees of subordination, which are a bit lower than in diegesis. The simplification in this case can be influenced also by the configuration that most of the mimetic parts have, i.e. the quotation within narration. Quotations are indeed usually short or medium in length, with a limited number of clauses and mostly presenting a first degree of subordination. A third degree of embedding or over appears only in sentences over five clauses. Still, even in these longer sentences the degree of subordination is generally kept low, confirming that also in mimesis Arbasino tends to construct horizontally extended sentences, that exceed the standard, but not deep, thus in line with the standard for the degree of subordination.

Let us take a closer look at these longer sentences. We mostly find a similar situation as in diegesis: the sentence is structured on a series of independent clauses coordinated, on which one or two subordinates can depend, thus keeping the degree of subordination low:

- (29) ‘Quell’altra la chiameremo la crisi, viene da una famiglia a modo ma adesso non hanno più niente, e lei povera e sfiorita ha dovuto mettersi a **lavorare**; ha il diploma di maestra, o delle “complementari”, vive con la madre sola e escono insieme la domenica pomeriggio; la madre vuol sapere tutto, **chi incontra per la strada, che cosa dicono in ufficio**, adesso per settimane la povera crisi dovrà raccontare tutto quello **che han fatto in questi due giorni di vacanza.**’ (*Distesa*, p. 36)

This example counts eighty words, thirteen clauses, of which nine independents and four subordinates, and just a first degree of subordination. The sentence, although shorter, can be compared to the previous example 27, from the diegetic level of *Distesa*. Here also linearity prevails over depth, since the sentence is structured on coordination of independent clauses (I have highlighted syndetic/asyndetic coordination), on which in some cases one or two subordinates depend (in bold). We can also observe that, when the subordinates are two, they are coordinated one to the other, so that the degree of subordination is always 1 (‘chi incontra per la strada, che cosa dicono in ufficio’).

Moreover, also in mimesis we can note sentences with just one independent and three or four subordinates, where however the degree of subordination is kept low by coordination of subordinates, as in this example from *Luglio*:

- (30) ‘Io gli riferivo una osservazione di Savinio, appunto, **secondo cui Mozart è sempre un fanciullo, Schumann sempre un adolescente, Beethoven sempre un uomo maturo, Rossini sempre un vecchio.**’ (*Luglio*, p. 158)

Here there are four subordinates and one independent, yet the degree of subordination is just one.

3.2.2.2 Distribution of Subordinate Clauses

We can now take a look at the distribution of independent and subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences, and at the ratio independent/subordinate in diegesis and mimesis:

Table 3-13 – Distribution of subordinates PV

| | PV diegesis | PV mimesis |
|---|-------------|------------|
| Average no. of independent clauses in hypotactic sentences | 3.15 | 2.81 |
| Average no. of subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 2.84 | 2.3 |
| Ratio independent/subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1:0.9 | 1:0.82 |

The key point of this table is that for both diegesis and mimesis there are on average more independent than subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences. These data therefore confirm the mostly paratactic and simple organization of even hypotactic sentences in PV. We could say that the average hypotactic sentence in diegesis is five or six clauses long, with two to three subordinates; and four to five clauses long with two to three subordinates in mimesis. Yet let us see the averages of each short story for the two levels.

Diegesis

Here are data from the diegetic level:

Table 3-14 – Distribution of subordinates short stories diegesis

| | Distesa diegesis | Blue jeans diegesis | Giorgio diegesis | Luglio diegesis | Agosto diegesis |
|--|------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Average no. of ind clauses in hypotactic sentences | 3.67 | 2.79 | 6.13 | 2 | 2.38 |
| Average no. of sub clauses in hypotactic sentences | 3.5 | 2.07 | 4.93 | 2.86 | 2.04 |
| Ratio ind/sub clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1:0.95 | 1:0.74 | 1:0.8 | 1:1.43 | 1:0.85 |

As we can see, the average numbers of independent and subordinate clauses can vary greatly according to the short story: from the two or three independents and two subordinates per sentence in *Agosto* and *Blue jeans* to the six independents and five subordinates in *Giorgio*. Yet, in all of them, apart from *Luglio*, the ratio sees independents prevail over subordinates. It is interesting to notice for example that *Giorgio*, the short story with the highest average degree of subordination (2), has the second lowest number of subordinates for each

independent (0.8), a measure that counterbalances the (minimal) complexity and fosters linearity. Let us see some examples of typical sentences.

As said above, in *Agosto* and *Blue jeans* the average hypotactic sentence is four to five clauses, with two subordinate clauses. The following is an exemplar hypotactic sentence:

- (31) Il caffè sotto i platani; venivamo con quelle di Pietrasanta, **a mangiar mandorle salate comprate in drogheria**; poi via tutte insieme, in bicicletta. (*Agosto*, p. 184)

Three independent clauses coordinated; one of them carries two subordinates embedded one into the other. Hypotactic sentences can naturally have more or fewer clauses than the average: in these two stories, around one third of hypotactic sentences have between six and fifteen clauses, with an average of five independents and three or four subordinates.²²

Luglio has an average hypotactic sentence composed of two independents and two or three subordinates: it is the only story where subordinates exceed independents. However, the ‘inverted’ ratio of *Luglio* does not jeopardize the general parataxis and linearity. In fact, where subordinates prevail, often they are coordinated one to the other, as in this example with six clauses, two independents and four subordinates, but just a second degree of subordination, thanks to the coordination of subordinates:

- (32) Io avevo sospeso la ricerca sottile delle cause, dei moventi, delle conseguenze; ma restava non plausibile **perché solo pochi anni prima casa Luzzatti fosse piena di gaia gente e ragazzi, e da qualche tempo invece si vedessero tanto più spesso e quasi sempre Adriana e Annina sedere sole davanti alla televisione o ricamando tovaglie**. (*Luglio*, p. 150)

In *Distesa*, the average hypotactic sentence has three to four independents and three to four subordinates, thus an almost equivalent ratio independent / subordinate, as in the following example, with three independents and three subordinates:

²² This calculation is based on corpus data that I have not included in the tables above.

- (33) Al sole **che uscì ostinato per giorni e giorni verso la metà di gennaio** noi uscivamo ogni pomeriggio molto presto **a scavar solchi nelle carreggiate in discesa**: fu pronta una pista **che il gelo notturno consolidava**, e ci buttammo giù in slitta contro il vento arido. (*Distesa*, p. 10)

Again we can observe the linear structure of the sentence, which keeps the degree of subordination low to the first degree. 88% of hypotactic sentences in *Distesa* actually have between two and eight clauses; but 12% have a very high number of clauses, over twenty, which increases the average.²³ Finally, in *Giorgio* the average hypotactic sentence is exceptionally composed of six independents and four to five subordinates: despite the length and richness of clauses, as we have seen the ratio is one of the lowest.

Mimesis

The breakdown for mimesis confirms that the characters' discourse slightly simplifies when compared to data from the narrator's discourse:

Table 3-15 – Distribution of subordinates short stories mimesis

| | Distesa mimesis | Blue jeans mimesis | Giorgio mimesis | Luglio mimesis | Agosto mimesis |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Average no. of ind clauses in hypotactic sentences | 2.69 | 2.45 | 6.4 | 1.89 | 2.57 |
| Average no. of sub clauses in hypotactic sentences | 2.06 | 1.64 | 5.13 | 1.98 | 1.71 |
| Ratio ind/sub clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1:0.77 | 1:0.67 | 1:0.8 | 1:1.05 | 1:0.67 |

All of the stories - except *Giorgio* - simplify slightly when compared to diegesis: the average of independents and subordinates per hypotactic sentence decreases, and the ratio counts fewer subordinates per independent when compared to diegesis. Only *Giorgio* maintains the same ratio, which underlines once more the closeness of the two levels from the point of view of syntactic links within the sentence.

²³ Calculation based on data not included in the tables above.

Blue jeans, *Agosto*, and *Distesa* do not differ very much in terms of average number of clauses and ratio. The average number of independents is between two and three, while the average of subordinates is between one and two. This example has four clauses, three independents and one subordinate:

- (34) 'Perché non vendi tutto?' mi insinua. 'Realizza e comprati un bar-tabaccheria, ne trovi cento disposti **a fartelo andare avanti.**' (*Blue jeans*, p. 74)

In these stories around 28% of clauses have between five and thirteen clauses, with on average four or five independents and three subordinates.²⁴

Giorgio is the only story where the averages slightly increase instead of diminishing, with six to seven independents and four to five subordinates. 20% of sentences here can have between eight and thirty-two independents and between six and eighteen subordinates. Finally, *Luglio* is the only story where the ratio is one subordinate for each independent, thus slightly more in favour of subordinates than in other short stories:

- (35) 'Può darsi **che sia una cosa importante**' disse Giuliana. 'Sono certa **che sia importante**. Letizia non fa niente per niente e non si cura delle forme; sono certa **che ha aspettato di scrivere al barunèn magari anni e anni, per risparmiare il francobollo**' (*Luglio*, pp. 151-52)

In this example we can notice the perfectly equal distribution of subordinates: one independent and one subordinate in the first and second sentence, three independents and three subordinates in the third sentence. In one instance the hypotactic sentence reaches seven clauses, with six subordinates and one independent: this is the case of example 24 already seen in the section on coordination. In that occasion we have observed that, although it contained many subordinates, the sentence was not complex, both because the degree of subordination was kept low by coordinating subordinate clauses and because of the use of 'loose' syntactic links.

²⁴ Calculation based on data not included in the tables above.

3.2.2.3 Types of Subordinate Clauses

Finally, after the analysis of the degree of subordination and the distribution of clauses, we can take a look at the types of subordinate clauses present in PV:

Table 3-16 – Types of subordinates PV

| | PV diegesis | PV mimesis |
|---|-------------|------------|
| Noun clauses (direct + indirect object) | 22.9% | 32.15% |
| Noun clauses (subject) | 6.13% | 7.72% |
| Interrogative | 3.55% | 3.22% |
| RELATIVE CLAUSES | | |
| Restrictive Relative | 29.68% | 23.47% |
| Non-Restrictive Relative | 1.94% | 0.96% |
| ADVERBIAL CLAUSES | | |
| Temporal | 6.77% | 3.86% |
| Final | 9.68% | 10.93% |
| Causal | 4.84% | 4.82% |
| Mode | 5.81% | 0.96% |
| Hypothetical | 1.94% | 3.54% |
| Comparative | 1.61% | 4.18% |
| Concessive | 0.97% | 1.61% |
| Consecutive | 1.61% | 0 |
| Exclusion | 0.65% | 0.96% |
| ‘Coordinated’ gerund | 0.32% | 1.61% |
| Appositional infinitive | 1.61% | 0 |

Diegesis

The situation in PV diegesis sees a relative majority of restrictive relative clauses, followed by noun clauses: together they form more than half of all of the subordinate clauses. This datum does not surprise us since relative and noun clauses are among the most common clauses in general and in contemporary Italian narrative.²⁵ On the other hand, adverbial clauses present a wide spectrum

²⁵ Mauroni found these two types prevalent in all of the four authors analysed. Mauroni, ‘La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei’, pp. 238, 243, 248, 254.

of types, from the more ordinary final, temporal and causal clauses to instances - although quite sporadic - of hypothetical, concessive and exclusion clauses.

In terms of differences and similarities among short stories in the diegetic level, I will underline some of the major ones without reporting the table with the breakdown for each short story. In *Blue jeans* there is a higher presence of subject noun clauses than in other short stories (13.3%). This results from the use of impersonal constructions such as ‘bisogna’, ‘è necessario’, ‘è inutile’ etc., dictated by the changes that the narrator is enforcing on his life in order to improve his image or by the observation of his physical failure: ‘E bisogna **che stia attento a quello** che mangio’, ‘è inutile **cercare** di nascondermi’. *Giorgio* has the highest percentage of interrogative (6.8%) and hypothetical clauses (4%), signs of the constant questioning of the narrators about their love affair: ‘**se tu mi respingi se tu non me lo dai** mi ammazzi’, ‘non so **come ho potuto pensare tante balordaggini**’.

The adverbial clauses with the highest percentages - final, temporal and mode clauses - are widespread in all stories. Worthy of mention is that almost all final clauses have a non-finite form (*a* or *per* + infinitive): this choice can be linked to the attempt to avoid the literary feel that the finite form can convey and favour a more colloquial version of the subordinate: ‘e ci voleva la fine della guerra **per rincontrarsi**’; ‘mi nascondo **per curarmi**’.²⁶ The fact that quite a high percentage of final clauses are in *Distesa* and that they are all non-finite reveals that syntactic choices tend to get closer to the spoken pole and colloquial register rather than to the literary one, even though lyrical effects in terms of rhythm and lexis are sought. Also all mode clauses have a non-finite form of the verb, gerund. Their presence is especially high in *Agosto*, where in some cases they represent the only expression of subordination in the short and fragmented sentences of the reportage-style passages:

²⁶ We can recall that the finite form of final clauses is introduced by conjunctions *perché*, *affinché*, *onde*, *a che* + subjunctive. Of these conjunctions, only *perché* is of common use, the others belong to an elevated register or are rare. Marcella Bertuccelli Papi, ‘Finali’, GGIC, II, 818-825 (p.822). Moreover, according to Monica Berretta, the construction *per* + infinitive for final clauses is very widespread in spoken Italian; and for Sabatini it is now a feature of *italiano medio*. Monica Berretta, ‘Il parlato italiano contemporaneo’, in *Storia della lingua italiana*, ed. by Luca Serianni and Pietro Trifone, 3 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1994), II: *Scritto e parlato*, pp. 239-70 (p. 252); Sabatini, ‘L’italiano dell’uso medio’, p. 166.

- (36) Se la incontrassi da qualche parte. Domani mattina la cercherò all'indirizzo. Villa dei cugini, in pineta, verso Fiumetto, **seguendo la via interna**. Se la vedessi. (Agosto, p. 184)

We can notice the high fragmentation of the passage, also characterized by nominal style and linearity. In this context non-finite subordinate clauses are preferred exactly because they maintain the impression of non-finiteness (indications of person and number are absent as in noun clauses) and do not disrupt linearity.

This is clearer when Arbasino chooses to use gerund where he could have used a finite form of the verb and a conjunction, as for the following temporal clause: 'Lei **salutandomi** diceva un po' sorridendo ma sorridendo con le labbra e non con gli occhi'. Here 'salutandomi' is used instead of the finite form 'mentre mi salutava', both to reduce the impact of the interruption of the main clause 'lei diceva' (therefore favouring linearity), and to adapt the form of the verb to that of the following mode gerund 'sorridendo'. A clear preference for non-finite subordinates in PV remains however confined to final, mode and appositional infinitives clauses while other subordinate clauses usually have a majority of finite forms of the verb. Still, if we consider the conjunctions used, we can see that they are scarcely varied and among the most common in contemporary Italian: *quando* is the most used for temporal clauses, *perché* for causal, *anche se* is the only one appearing for concessive clauses, while we can count single examples of *mentre*, *siccome* or *perché* (for a final clause).²⁷ The range of conjunctions shows once more that Arbasino intends to keep subordination simple and within the spectrum of *lingua media*.

To further confirm this, there is the presence of a typical construction of *lingua media*, cleft sentences.²⁸ Cleft sentences are marked constructions formed by two clauses, a main clause with copula and a subordinate clause (pseudo-relative) with *che* + finite verb or *a* + infinitive.²⁹ Their presence - not

²⁷ Rombi, Policarpi, 'Mutamenti sintattici nell'italiano contemporaneo', pp. 236-337.

²⁸ Sabatini, 'L'italiano dell'uso medio', p. 163.

²⁹ E.g. 'è Giovanna che ha preso i giornali'. The non-marked construction would be 'Giovanna ha preso i giornali'. The cleft sentence emphasizes an element of the clause in terms of contrast with another element of the same grammatical category (e.g. 'è Giovanna che ha preso i giornali, non Giulia'); the element emphasized here is the comment-new information. Paola Benincà, 'L'ordine degli elementi della frase e le costruzioni marcate', GGIC, I, pp. 115-225 (p. 195).

pervasive, one or two instances per short story - in PV diegesis is registered in four stories out of five (no examples in *Distesa*), and is a sign of an approach towards the modes of expression of spoken language. In the following example from *Blue jeans* we can see how the cleft sentence ('sono io che voglio') cohabits with a more traditional feature such as the *tricolon* ('scrutare [...], insinuarmi [...], sorprendere [...]'):

- (37) Tutto è come prima, sono io, sono io che voglio scrutare fra le sue parole e i suoi pensieri, insinuarmi in un attimo di incertezza, sorprendere un sintomo di stanchezza rivelata. (*Blue jeans*, p. 94)

Less frequent are examples of *c'è presentativo*, again one of the marked constructions belonging to *lingua media*, where *c'è/ci sono* introduces a noun phrase specified by a subordinate clauses (pseudo-relative) with *che* + finite verb or *a* + infinitive.³⁰ In the corpus of PV diegesis there are only two examples, in *Blue jeans* and *Giorgio*: 'e intanto le scapole si vedono muovere e non c'è neanche un pannicoletto adiposo a coprirle', 'ci siamo fermati in un'osteria ancora aperta dove c'erano dei tipi seduti in circolo che si facevano passare delle caraffe'. Instead, we find no examples of *che polivalente*, a construction of spoken and informal Italian where *che* replaces other conjunctions more precise semantically. The reason of its absence can be probably linked to the fact that the construction at the time was still felt by the author as too informal and belonging to a language too careless to be used by narrators who belong to the middle class and are educated (whereas it can be found in Neorealist novels).³¹

Mimesis

The mimetic level sees slightly different percentages than diegesis: in general terms, the percentage of noun clauses increases, while that of adverbial clauses diminishes. Moreover, the variety of adverbial clauses is narrowed, although there is still a good representation of types. Therefore, also in this case the slightly greater simplicity of mimesis is confirmed.

³⁰ E.g. 'c'è un bambino che attraversa la strada'. The non-marked construction would be 'un bambino attraversa la strada'. Berruto, *Sociolinguistica dell'italiano contemporaneo*, pp. 67-8.

³¹ Giuliana Fiorentino, 'Che polivalente', in *Enciclopedia dell'italiano* (2010) <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/che-polivalente_\(Enciclopedia_dell'Italiano\)/>](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/che-polivalente_(Enciclopedia_dell'Italiano)/>), accessed 11 January 2016.

In particular, we notice a more frequent use of non-finite noun clauses depending on semi-auxiliary verbs such as *andare a*, *riuscire a*, *cercare di*, *venire a* and verbs of perception than in diegesis. These are also signalled by Berretta as common in spoken language:³²

- (38) 'Claudia è solo una bambina poco felice che cerca di sfidare se stessa e gli altri con le sue pseudo-prodezze.' (*Blue jeans*, p. 88)
- (39) 'E ultimamente' mi diceva ancora 'è riuscita a trovare un altro modo di far soldi' (*Luglio*, p. 153)

There are also fewer gerundive clauses than diegesis (see for example the percentage of mode clauses, usually gerundive); similarly, we do not find as many non-restrictive relative clauses. Gerundive and non-restrictive relative clauses can take a parenthetical position and disrupt linearity: their scarcity in mimesis can be taken as a sign of linearity.

On the other hand, variety in the types of subordinate clauses is present in mimesis as well. In three short stories - *Distesa*, *Luglio* and *Giorgio* - almost all of the types are represented, and only *Blue jeans* and partly *Agosto* have a scarce variety. As we can note in the following example, many types of adverbial clauses can coexist in one sentence:

- (40) Vorrei dirgli 'Luciano non lo faccio certo per interesse, che cosa me ne verrebbe in tasca, e non lo faccio **per prenderti in giro dopo e deriderti con gli altri** come potresti pensare, **né per immischiarmi nei tuoi affari privati, darti consigli non richiesti, né per mettere il naso nella tua vita sentimentale e pretendere confidenze** che non sollecito, **né per combinar qualcosa alle tue spalle, né per fare strani esperimenti psico-sessuali ai tuoi danni**, Luciano, lo faccio solo per simpatia, e per un certo senso di solidarietà, non stupirti, io con te sto bene e non potrei più fare a meno di te, ti vedo uguale preciso **com'ero io qualche anno fa**, stesse idee, stesse preferenze, stesso modo di fare, **perché io in te mi riconosco, in tutto, anche nelle antipatie, e perché io non avevo nessuno, come potresti avere in me, solo che tu volessi**, che mi parlasse e mi desse eventualmente una mano in qualunque momento come io non chiedo di meglio che fare per te...' (*Giorgio*, p. 118)

The adverbial clauses are here crucial to support Giorgio's argument: persuading Luciano to surrender to his advances. At the beginning there is a series of final clauses that reiterate the absence of any hidden aim (non lo faccio per prenderti

³² Berretta, 'Il parlato italiano contemporaneo', p. 252.

in giro dopo e deriderti [...] né per immischiarmi [...] né per mettere il naso etc.'). In the second half of the sentence there is a more constructive part where Giorgio stresses the similarities between them by using comparative clauses ('ti vedo uguale preciso com'ero io'), and where he highlights the reasons of his infatuation with causal clauses. In the end, he almost implores Luciano with a concessive clause ('solo che tu volessi').

Finally, the range of conjunctions used for finite adverbial clauses is even more limited than that of diegesis, with instances of *quando*, *perché*, *anche se* and one *perché* for a final clause. Hypothetical clauses are all of the first type. We also find examples of cleft sentences ('sono io che le ho detto che mi piace molto', 'è me che sposerà') but none of *c'è presentativo* or *che polivalente*.

The analysis of coordination and subordination has allowed us to verify some elements that had already emerged in the section on length and composition. First of all, the nature of PV as syntactic and stylistic laboratory is confirmed. There are passages characterized by lean syntax, made of clauses coordinated through asyndeton, fragmentation and nominal style, which help to convey the impression of a dynamic and informal on-the-spot report or, where no action is involved, of cinematographic shots. Then there are passages characterized by long sentences where clauses are loosely linked through cumulative *e*, textual conjunctions, and punctuation weaker than normally expected: these contribute to recreating an overflowing monologue. Finally, there are passages featuring a regular and rhythmic parataxis, which confirm the legacy of literary tradition.

Secondly, also the closeness of the mimetic level to the diegetic one is confirmed: the former appears only slightly simpler than the latter. This is especially true in the more experimental passages, for example in *Giorgio*, where both the long monologues in diegesis and in mimesis use the same structure made of clusters of independent clauses+subordinates loosely coordinated together to mimic a monologue. In *Agosto*, short and paratactic sentences level direct speech, free direct speech and narration. Also elsewhere there is an attempt to level diegesis and mimesis in the direction of a recreation of spoken language, by using similar patterns, cumulative parataxis, textual

conjunctions that loosely link clauses, colloquial lexis, and segmentations of the clause or sentence (dislocations, cleft sentences), although being careful not to use devices that indicate a language too careless and informal.

Unlike what was seen for length and composition, each short story appears in line with the tendency of *italiano contemporaneo* insofar as the preference for paratactic over hypotactic structures is concerned (coordination of clusters of independent clauses+subordinates, coordination of subordinates). Also subordination appears in line with the trend of contemporary Italian (low degree of subordination, limited variety of the subordinates most used). This means that when Arbasino breaks with the standard he does this only in terms of horizontal extension of the sentence and not in terms of complexity. We can recall here the abnormal length and number of clauses of some sentences, which however do not present a high degree of subordination.

The next section will explore the use of nominal style, as we have observed an important element of Arbasino's syntax. This will help us add further evidence to what we have said so far.

3.3 Nominal Style

In this section, I will explore nominal style and its contribution to the stylistic profile of PV. One of the predominant features of literary language of twentieth century, nominal style is key also in the construction of Arbasino's individual style. As we will see, it will assume a great prominence in the last work examined, FI, and from there in the subsequent works.³³ However, also in PV its presence does not go unnoticed, especially in the narrator's discourse analysed here. From a quantitative point of view, the occurrence of predicative nominal sentences or mixed sentences is remarkable in diegesis, as the table shows us:

³³ Della Corte for example argues that nominal style is one of the distinguishing features of the diegetic parts of *La bella di Lodi* (1972). Della Corte, *Come ombre vivaci sullo sfondo*, pp. 146-48.

Table 3-17 – Nominal style PV

| | PV diegesis |
|---|-------------|
| Predicative nominal Sentences as % of total number of sentences | 18.29% |
| Mixed sentences as % of total number of sentences | 8.13% |
| Verbal sentences as % of total number of sentences | 73.58% |

The diegetic level counts a very high percentage of predicative nominal sentences. If we think for example that De Mauro, when gathering data concerning nominal style in his corpus of literary works from 1950s onwards, finds that on average there is an 8.4% of nominal sentences in his corpus, we can see how Arbasino's work is well above the average.³⁴ Obviously percentages of nominal and mixed sentences are not uniform in all short stories. Although in this section we will not go in depth into the distinctions among short stories, we can see the differences in this table:

Table 3-18 – Nominal style short stories

| | Distesa diegesis | Blue jeans diegesis | Giorgio diegesis | Luglio diegesis | Agosto diegesis |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Predicative nominal sentences | 14.71% | 11.11% | 10.53% | 17.95% | 28.05% |
| Mixed sentences | 11.76% | 8.33% | 10.53% | 2.56% | 8.54% |
| Verbal sentences | 73.53% | 80.56% | 78.95% | 79.49% | 63.41% |

The percentages of nominal and mixed sentences range between 36.6% of *Agosto* and 19.4% of *Blue jeans*: overall, nominal style seems to be an important presence in all these short stories.

In terms of types of nominal structures and their functions, we will see that alongside more traditional and specifically literary ones, such as appositions, there are also some that become a fundamental feature of the most innovative passages, where Arbasino experiments syntactically and stylistically. Indeed, some of the most characteristic Arbasinian uses and functions of nominal style start to see the light in PV: predicative nominal sentences, the predicative

³⁴ De Mauro, PTLLIN, p. 41.

nominal clause at the beginning of the sentence and lists. Although also the mimetic level has instances of nominal style, I have decided to focus on the diegetic one because it is where innovative devices linked to the author's stylistic choices emerge more clearly.³⁵

3.3.1 Nominal Appositions: The Legacy of Literary Language

Let us start with a traditional and common feature of nominal style: appositions. When it comes to describing the physical appearance of a character or a place, Arbasino resorts to enumerative appositions, which break up the appearance of a person or of a place into the single parts that compose it. As Herczeg underlines, enumerative appositions are tools for realistic depiction (they are used for 'conferire una maggiore precisione al racconto o alla descrizione, in funzione di una visione naturalistica ed impressionistica') yet when Arbasino writes the stories of PV they are already quite consolidated in narrative, as a number of examples from Cicognani, Soffici, Papini and then Pratolini, Soldati show.³⁶ As a consequence, the effect is of a plain and traditional realistic description, as in this example from *Blue jeans* (in italics):

(41) Non faccio altro che pensare a lei, non posso farne a meno. *La sua figura di bambina ostinata, il suo collo sottile, la schiena magra perché non vuol mangiare, e intanto le scapole si vedono muovere e non c'è neanche un pannicoletto adiposo a coprirle, le sue gambe irrequiete, gli occhi scuri che non sono mai ridenti, sempre seri anche se lei sghignazza, la bocca appena segnata che pure ha già fatto tanta strada.* (*Blue jeans*, p. 82)

The result is quite far from the dynamic and fragmented parts of reportage which appear elsewhere in this short story. No formal element suggests fragmentation or dynamism here: each noun phrase referring to a part of the body of Cuor di Senape is coordinated by comma in a long sentence; moreover, the description of this young *femme fatale* is quite trite as shown by the use of stereotyped noun phrases 'collo sottile', 'schiena magra', 'occhi ridenti/seri'

³⁵ In the characters' discourse we often find typical nominal style devices linked to the recreation of spoken language, for example exclamations 'Che bel vestito, che bel vestito'; direct questions 'Alta moda?'; nominal sentences introduced by *ecco* 'Ecco la Garbo in Margherita Gautier' and elliptical sentences that mimic the situational and interactive nature of dialogues: 'E tu, Sandra?'. 'Oh, un gelato di frutta, io, grazie'.

³⁶ Herczeg, *Lo stile nominale in italiano*, p. 30.

and the metaphor of the ‘bocca appena segnata che pure ha già fatto tanta strada’.³⁷

Another type of apposition codified by Herczeg as typically literary and found in the diegetic level of PV is what he calls *apposizione con funzione modale-associativa*, which describes the way an action is performed:³⁸

- (42) *Una astratta rassegnazione mascherata da superiorità*, si ritirava. ‘Avevano un servo briccone come in una commedia classica’. Né incontri nei negozi. Solo le carte, ogni sera. E la sera i ragazzi fumavano, ogni sera le colline oscure, le logge illuminate, e al bar del Grand Hotel i ragazzi non sapevano che cosa dire. (*Distesa*, p. 32)

Although in the late 1950s-early 1960s and more solidly in the 1970s journalistic reportage will re-use this type of apposition as a strategy for economizing on structures and introduce a higher incisiveness in the sentence, in PV it appears still linked to its literary nature, as the co-text given testifies.³⁹ In particular, a lyrical tone is conveyed by the conjunction *e* at the beginning of the last sentence (underlined) and by the two preceding predicative nominal sentences, isolated and emphasized by the full stop.

3.3.2 Predicative Nominal Sentences: Between Lyricism and Dynamic Reportage

The second feature of nominal style found in PV is nominal sentences with a predicative function: that is, sentences where the finite verb is cancelled and its function is assumed by the nominal part.⁴⁰ Because the predicative function is assumed by a noun, adjective, non-finite form of the verb, adverb or interjection, it lacks indications of tense, mode and person; as a result, the

³⁷ On the use of the topos of the *femme fatale* in Arbasino's first works see Della Corte, *Come ombre vivaci sullo sfondo*, pp. 73-8.

³⁸ Herczeg, *Lo stile nominale in italiano*, p. 35.

³⁹ Dardano, *Il linguaggio dei giornali italiani*, pp. 318-19; Francesca Gatta, ‘Giornalismo’, in *Storia dell'italiano scritto*, ed. by Giuseppe Antonelli, Matteo Motolese, Lorenzo Tomasin, 3 vols (Rome: Carocci, 2014), III: *Italiano dell'uso*, pp. 293-348 (p. 338); Herczeg, *Lo stile nominale in italiano*, p. 42.

⁴⁰ Mortara Garavelli, ‘Fra norma e invenzione: lo stile nominale’, pp. 278-84; Angela Ferrari, ‘Stile nominale’, in *Enciclopedia dell'italiano* (2011), <

predication is a-temporal, impersonal and not modal.⁴¹ Exploiting the a-temporality and impersonality to enhance a sense of lyrical indeterminacy, predicative nominal constructions have been used in literary writing since the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the first and most famous examples is D'Annunzio's *Notturmo*, where short predicative nominal sentences 'riproducono suggestivi fondali e moti dell'animo' in accordance with the elevated style of the work.⁴² Around the 1960s, however, they lose the lyrical connotation and become means to communicate rapidity, conciseness and also closeness to spoken language.⁴³ At the same time, journalistic reportage starts to incorporate them, especially for their adaptability and capacity to condense information.⁴⁴

In this framework, Arbasino shows again his inclination towards experimenting structures and finding an individual style, since it is possible to find in PV predicative nominal clauses or sentences contributing both to a lyrical and dynamic outcome. For example in *Distesa*, as already highlighted in the section on length, short predicative nominal sentences are inserted in a narration in *passato remoto*. Their function here is to comment on a previous statement, fix a memory, inviting the reader to stop and weigh up words:

- (43) Era passato quel terzo inverno in campagna più lungo degli altri, e non sempre avevamo preso il trenino singhiozzo per scendere a scuola. Neve ogni settimana, gli spazzaneve quasi mai. (*Distesa*, p. 9)

In some cases, predicative nominal sentences contribute to increasing the lyrical charge of the moment, as in example 3 above.

On the other hand, in the parts of *Blue jeans* and *Agosto* where Arbasino recreates the narrator's fragmented and quick reportage close to spoken language, the predicative nominal sentence lends its support with its conciseness and impersonality:

⁴¹ Mortara Garavelli, 'Fra norma e invenzione: lo stile nominale', p. 273; Mortara Garavelli here is quoting from *La phrase nominale* by Emile Benveniste.

⁴² For example: 'Il bacino di San Marco, azzurro. Il cielo da per tutto. Stupore, disperazione.', Dardano, 'Romanzo', p. 396.

⁴³ Dardano, 'Romanzo', p. 396.

⁴⁴ Dardano, *Il linguaggio dei giornali italiani*, pp. 300-20; Gatta, 'Giornalismo', p. 338.

- (44) Esercizi in casa. E bisogna che stia attento a quello che mangio: ho la nota con me. (*Blue jeans*, p. 92)

In this case it does not express a comment on a concept stated in a previous verbal sentence, rather it helps to carry on the action: from this comes the impression of dynamism that it conveys.

Furthermore, exploiting its potential in terms of recreation of spoken language, Arbasino uses nominal style also as a vehicle for polyphony, meant as the blurring of the borders between narrator's and characters' discourse. In the following passage, the narrator's discourse is entirely in nominal style. The brachylogic forms of nominal style allow him to maintain the same spoken feeling of the short and quick dialogic exchanges with which they are intertwined, smoothing the two levels of discourse. This is further helped by the fact that we do not know most of the time who utters the parts in direct speech, which increases the impression of immediacy and on-the-spot report. Ultimately, this uniformity opens spaces for parts in free direct speech as the last sentence 'Attenti alle multe', which reads like a warning addressed to another character but is presented without inverted commas:

- (45) Qualche minuto per la macchina, a disincagliarla dal parcheggio, e qualcuno, altrettanti, fino al Marco Polo. 'È qui?'. 'No, più avanti, la strada interna della pineta'. Ombre furtive, sprazzi di luce o di musica; e attenzione agli attraversamenti. Un teatrino di marionette. 'Ma è presto, è presto'. Vicino alla stazione un baretto con biliardi; e il cartello di una pizza squisita. 'Dario aspettava qui'. Dario era dentro, esce, ma 'sono con due rompiscatole' dice: 'cinque minuti per tagliarli fuori. Al solito posto'.
Via ancora. Era un caffè quasi sordido. Le strade semideserte, ecco il lungomare però, l'urto della folla.
'Di là dal canale? Costa dei Barbari?'. Attenti alle multe. (*Agosto*, p. 193)

In these parts, among the most experimental in the work, Arbasino is getting close to the one, long and uninterrupted discourse that characterizes Gadda and other expressionist and experimental writers, and that will be re-used in FI.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', pp. 689-90, Dardano, 'Romanzo', p. 394.

3.3.3 Predicative Nominal Clauses at the Beginning of the Sentence and Lists: The Birth of Stylistic Features

In this section, I will present some more nominal constructions that will become stylistic features of Arbasino's writing: predicative nominal clauses at the beginning of the sentence and nominal lists.

Predicative nominal clauses have the same features as the sentences described above; the only difference is that they are part of a mixed sentence, containing both nominal and verbal clauses. Arbasino uses them usually at the beginning of a sentence, separated from the rest by a strong punctuation mark, colon or semi-colon. In all cases they are used to present information in a brief and semantically full way:

(46) Cinquale: non ballerei più in slip; e neanche per scherzo sugli aeroplanini. (*Agosto*, p. 184)

(47) Parigi, Madrid, Tangeri; è diventato tutto più facile. (*Blue jeans*, p. 93)

The construction, which in PV is still rare but will become very widespread in FI, contributes with a dynamic and impersonal impression to the parts of on-the-spot report. As in the case of predicative nominal sentences, Arbasino is experimenting a less traditional use of nominal style, closer to the values of spoken language and communicating rapidity and objectivity. Not by chance, as Dardano explains, the predicative nominal clause at the beginning of the sentence is common in the language of journalistic reportage, especially from the 1970s.⁴⁶ Arbasino, always very sensitive to linguistic variations, exploits this innovative use of nominal style for stylistic purposes. Thus, while the construction is becoming a typical feature of journalistic common language, Arbasino makes it one of the key features of his drive to 'capture the present': indeed, we will find it both in his journal articles in the early 1960s as well as in

⁴⁶ According to Dardano, it is used to introduce in an economic way (from a linguistic point of view) some elements of the episode, for example: 'Grida isterismi e pianti: il processo contro Annunziata Tropeano [...] ripropone in aula il profondo rancore che divide le due famiglie.' Dardano underlines in 1974 that the predicative nominal clause is not a traditional device of nominal style; it is instead 'una tendenza progressiva dello stile nominale, presente nella scrittura giornalistica'; Dardano, *Il linguaggio dei giornali italiani*, p. 313. In the same years, in Mortara Garavelli's study on nominal style, predicative nominal clauses started to be recognized also in the language of contemporary literary texts; Herczeg's study on nominal style in literature, dated 1967, instead was only considering appositions, nominal devices that therefore had a descriptive function.

FI, widely exploited in the parts where the narrator is making a reportage, as it will be shown in the last case study.

In PV it is also possible to see the first instances of one of the most significant devices of Arbasino's style, nominal lists.⁴⁷ From a syntactic point of view, lists are paratactic and a-hierarchical structures, where items are coordinated one to the other, potentially *ab infinitum*. In PV, lists are rare and self-contained but when they appear, they still represent powerful breaks with the syntactic context. In the section on coordination, we commented for example on a sentence from *Distesa* containing a nominal list (example 21): 'Mira vicino a noi; Mira contro il cielo bianco; Mira biondissima fra i papaveri e il grano; etc.'. The dry, juxtaposed, fragmented syntax represents also a stylistic change: from the slow and almost static memoir in the past tense to a-temporal short clauses where nouns stand out, almost resembling for their visual impact the written equivalent of filmic shots. The cinematographic syntax combined with the list becomes an effective way of describing reality objectively, without hierarchy, therefore without any of the despised moral judgements. This effect will be widely used in FI, but combined with a playful and parodic attitude that in PV is still very rare. An example can be the following from *Luglio*:

- (48) Qui già nei *couplets* dei locali notturni si mescolano i miliardari, i *congés payés* e le *tantes* di provincia. Parrucche bionde, muscoli arrossati, piedi sporchi dentro *espadrilles* logore. Pasti furtivi coi biscotti del 'Monoprix'. (*Luglio*, p. 154, italics by the author)

This list belongs to the most tentative section of *Luglio*, a lively description of the city of Cannes. Only here we find a narration in the present tense, deictics that root the narration in the 'here and now', a concentration of foreign terms and of experimental or innovative nominal style structures (apart from the list, also a predicative nominal clause at the beginning of the sentence). This story is generally characterized by a narration in the past, not particularly dynamic: in those parts only traditional types of nominal structures could be found. The list contributes greatly to the stylistic change, inserting in the a-hierarchical, objective and visual description elements of plurilingualism and references to

⁴⁷ Coletti, *Storia dell'italiano letterario*, p. 364.

consumer brands (the supermarkets *Monoprix*). We could argue it foreshadows the parodic and playful distortion of reality put into place in FI.

In summary, the analysis has shown that on the one hand PV is still tied to literary types and functions of nominal style, such as appositions and ‘lyrical’ nominal sentences, which reinforce the traditional profile of some parts. On the other hand, though, PV exploits the features of nominal devices such as predicative nominal sentences and lists to foster the dynamism, rapidity, visual impact of other parts of the work, those labelled as more experimental in style and syntax. These more experimental parts, where nominal style combines with fragmentation, linearity, free indirect speech herald the ones that will be found in subsequent works, especially FI.

3.4 Punctuation

In this last section, I will explore the uses of punctuation that break away from a logical-syntactic function to assume more expressive ones: recreating the flow of emotions, fragmenting syntax, mimicking the suspensions and prosody of spoken language.

3.4.1 ‘Emotional’ Punctuation

One of the common themes of the stories is the brief and intense infatuation that can occur during times of suspension of routine, like summer. It happens therefore that the first-person narrator falls prey to emotions: desperation for a lost love, passion and lust, joy for an unpredicted display of interest. Sometimes the expression of these emotions is quite dramatic and unrestrained, contrasting with the superficiality of the love story and intentionally creating a pathetic effect. On the formal level, the flow of emotions is mirrored by a combination of devices: parataxis, ‘loose’ links between clauses, in some cases the use of textual conjunctions to maintain the text cohesive and, as far as punctuation is concerned, the use of weaker marks than expected: commas instead of semicolon and colons, semicolons instead of full stops. Punctuation takes on a rhythmic function: rather than signalling syntactic units, it suggests the

acceleration of an excited speaker. In this case indeed punctuation gets closer to the rhythmic requirements of spoken language than to the logical-syntactic ones of written texts.⁴⁸

A clear example is in the monologues of *Giorgio*, both in diegesis and mimesis, entirely based on the representation of flows of words. Here the use of commas instead of semicolons, colons, full stops or even exclamation and question marks is crucial for the creation of the ‘rushing out’ effect. To show this, I propose the rewriting of part of example 26 above, with punctuation used according to the grammatical norm:

- (49) ‘Tu sta calmo: penso io a tenerli lontani. Ma smettila con le parole grosse, con i programmi di odii e rotture e tutte quelle balle lì: io capisco il tuo stato d’animo e ammetto subito che tutta la faccenda non è stata né molto brillante né molto pulita, però non avevo altro mezzo. Rifletti bene: nessuno lo sa né immagina niente. Io sono logicamente l’ultimo al mondo, nel mio stesso interesse, da cui lo si può venire a sapere. E il tuo interesse qual è?’

Underlined is where in the original there was a comma and now there is a stronger punctuation mark. What we gain with this operation is a clearer hierarchical organization of clauses and therefore a clearer understanding of concepts. For example, the re-integration of the colon in the first sentence clarifies the explicative relationship between the two clauses (‘Tu sta calmo: (infatti) penso io a tenerli lontani’).⁴⁹ What we lose is surely the impression that the narrator is agitated and eager to manipulate the reactions of his interlocutor, an important aspect in this story that plays with the stereotype of the ‘seduced and abandoned’ but applied to a homosexual love affair.

Another example is at the end of *Blue jeans*, where the protagonist understands that the story with his young lover is over. In this case, to mirror his irrepressible desperation any form of punctuation is cancelled:

- (50) È finita per me è finita per sempre perché mi ha lasciato perché mi ha lasciato. (*Blue jeans* p. 96)

⁴⁸ Mortara Garavelli, *Prontuario di punteggiatura*, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁹ On this function of the colon, see Mortara Garavelli, *Prontuario di punteggiatura*, p. 101.

In particular, the elimination of commas and question marks underlines the stereotyped nature of the repetition that in turn hints at the effect that the end of the affair had on the mind of the protagonist-narrator.

3.4.2 Fragmenting Punctuation

A use of punctuation that contrasts with the one just seen is that of full stops. In some parts, full stops are used to fragment the syntax and create a ‘broken’ style, where sequences of single-clause sentences are isolated and highlighted. Let us see an example from the mimetic level of *Luglio*:

- (51) ‘Sei una vagotonica. Subisci passivamente. E la colpa è anche di quegli altri nostri compagni di viaggio cretini che accettano tutto senza reagire. Dovevamo farci sentire subito. Hai avuto torto, ammettilo, dici che non ti importa niente dormire là per stanotte. Domani cambieremo. Bruciavi dalla voglia di venire a scuriosare in casa del *barunèn*. Anch’io. **Ma** dopo. Cambieremo domani, va bene. **Ma** poi mi dirai: per due notti vale la pena? [...]’ (*Luglio*, p. 155)

The change in rhythm from the monologues of *Giorgio* is evident: the full stop imposes a pause after each sentence producing, in Ferrari’s words, ‘una tensione tra sintassi e testualità che attiva a sua volta particolari effetti di senso, non rinvenibili quando il punto conferma una frattura testuale già imposta dalla sintassi’.⁵⁰ This is visible in particular for those sentences starting with *e* or *ma*, where the conjunction testifies that there is a syntactic link with the preceding sentence, yet the full stop forces a break.

The effects that fragmentation creates can vary: we have seen for example that, especially in *Agosto* and *Blue jeans*, the combination of nominal style and fragmentation leads to leanness and dynamism, the essence of the on-the-spot report narration. As we explained, this technique aims at being an alternative to the omniscient third-person narration of realist novels. This appears clear in examples like the following, where hyper-fragmentation through full stops not only contributes to the lively on-the-spot report, but also highlights the subversion of narrative techniques:

⁵⁰ Ferrari, *Le ragioni del testo*, p. 61.

- (52) È sabato sera. Le dieci. No, già le dieci e tre quarti, mi hanno fatto perder tempo all'albergo. Mi sento lavato, fresco; ma è tardi. Se la incontrassi da qualche parte. Domani mattina la cercherò all'indirizzo. (Agosto, p. 184)

From the objective narrator of the first two statements 'È sabato sera. Le dieci.' to the subjective narrator emerging in the third sentence 'No, già le dieci e tre quarti': Arbasino 'stages' the critique to the objective and omniscient narrator.

Similarly, in the same stories, we can observe the full stop used as an alternative to inverted commas and helping avoid direct speech:

- (53) Mi stupisco: 'Ma come, sei qui da due giorni e solo adesso ti fai viva?' Stanca morta, dormito, la nonna. 'Ci vediamo stasera?' Ma stasera è tardi, meglio domani. Ma domani vado io a Genova. Dopodomani. (*Blue jeans* p. 90)

As we can notice, from the beginning of this dialogue Arbasino avoids direct speech for both interlocutors: the narrator's words are between inverted commas while Cuor di Senape's words are in free indirect speech. However, the last lines of the dialogue are all in free indirect and free direct speech and only the full stops mark the change of conversational turn between the interlocutors. Interestingly, this technique is present also in Gadda, and testifies to a common alternative to traditional ways of representing direct speech.⁵¹ It could also possibly be a homage to the *ingegnere*, although Arbasino has declared that he was not yet passionate about Gadda at the time he was writing the stories of PV.⁵²

3.4.3 Hints of Orality

Finally, I will consider punctuation used to recreate an impression of orality: suspension points and prosodic comma. The use of this type of punctuation is

⁵¹ 'La segmentazione degli enunciati mediante l'intervento del punto è molto frequente nei passi dallo statuto enunciativo intermedio tra diegesi e mimesi, dove cioè il discorso del narratore accoglie quello dei suoi personaggi senza che i due piani siano distinti, ed è funzionale a rendere l'idea del continuo rimpallo dell'elocuzione tra le diverse voci in campo'. Tonani, *Punteggiatura d'autore*, p. 145.

⁵² 'Questi racconti, pubblicati in volume nel 1957, sono stati scritti nell'estate 1954 e nell'estate 1955, con un'appendice natalizia ancora del '55 [...] In quelle fasi non avevo ancora realmente scoperto né l'*Adalgisa* né le *Novelle dal ducato in fiamme* (letture esplosive e decisive che poco dopo determinarono direttamente il "libro di note" *L'Anonimo Lombardo*)'. Arbasino, *Le piccole vacanze*, 1971, p. 257.

still very sporadic in PV, yet it already points to the interest in introducing elements of orality in writing, both in the mimetic and in the diegetic parts.

Apart from the monologues of *Giorgio* where weak punctuation marks suggest a rhythmic use of punctuation, generally in the mimetic parts of other stories punctuation still has a logical-syntactic function. However, in some cases the use of suspension points signalling interruption or hesitation starts to emerge. In the following example from *Distesa* we find a dialogue with a fast turnover of conversational turns, although not immediately recognizable because lines follow one another horizontally:

- (54) Per la mamma aveva gran simpatia perché al suo primo ballo bianco, diceva ‘suo padre, cara signora, che era presidente del Circolo di Lodi, mi ha accolto con parole così appropriate così carine che non dimenticherò mai, e sono entrata in salone al suo braccio’. ‘Ma non poteva essere il papà...’. ‘Un bellissimo vecchio, diritto, coi baffoni bianchi?’. ‘Era il nonno’. (*Distesa* p. 21)

In one of the turns, ‘Ma non poteva essere il papà...’, suspension points appear: in this case they do not mean reticence, rather they signal that the utterance has been interrupted by the following one, ‘Un bellissimo vecchio [...]’, uttered by the other interlocutor. What probably happened is that the first interlocutor was about to explain why it could not be her father, but the second interlocutor interrupted her with a description of the person concerned. In other words, Arbasino is here mimicking the typical dynamic of spontaneous spoken interactions, where interlocutors normally overlap, change plan or, as in this case, interrupt each other.⁵³

We can observe also the spoken connotation assumed by suspension points in passages in free direct speech, as the following from the diegetic level of *Agosto*. The protagonist has just met a girl on the beach and engages in a conversation with her; however, only what the protagonist says is reported, in free direct speech:

- (55) Ah, ma se ha fatto la scuola a Genova! Ah, è console? E trasferito, già, ma da quando, dove... E tutta la famiglia lo segue in Inghilterra? È già là?

⁵³ Miriam Voghera, ‘Lingua parlata’, in *Enciclopedia dell’italiano* (2010), <

E quando? Ma - per sempre, dico, definitivamente? E, gli studi, le amicizie... Così presto... Beh, non pensiamoci, adesso. Ha mai visto nuotare 'alla caimano'? (*Agosto*, pp. 195-6)

The presence of direct questions and the series of interactional discourse markers ('ah', 'beh', 'dico') denote the passage as a recreation of a spontaneous spoken language situation. The suspension points in this case mimic either the gaps where the other interlocutor's responses should be ('ma da quando, dove... E tutta la famiglia lo segue in Inghilterra?') or the hesitant intonation of a person trying to find the right words, speaking and thinking at the same time. We can see for example a change of plan in 'Così presto... Beh, non pensiamoci'.

Alongside suspension points, we should mention the first appearances of prosodic commas, which will be more widely used in FI.⁵⁴ The prosodic comma hints at orality insofar as it marks the informative units and intonational boundaries of the sentence.⁵⁵ It is what Mortara Garavelli calls 'la sovraestensione dei valori intonativi attribuiti ai segni e in particolare alle virgole': that is, when the comma mirrors the pauses and changes of intonation of a spoken reproduction of the text.⁵⁶ In the corpus, I found just a few examples, both in diegesis (already quoted above, examples 12 and 20) and in mimesis:

- (56) 'Una un pomeriggio in casa d'una amica mia. "C'è l'avvocato (il marito) bisogno di un parere?". Fatta accomodare, a mezza voce, non si muove più. Discorre. Ritournerà. Dal marito non è mai andata, il parere, un pretesto.' (*Distesa*, p. 27)

The comma in 'il parere, un pretesto' is an informative and prosodic one, because it isolates the subject-topic-given information 'il parere' from the predicate-comment-new information 'un pretesto', signalling an intonational discontinuity between them.⁵⁷ Since the clause is nominal, the comma basically

⁵⁴ I will here just briefly comment on the examples, while a more detailed explanation can be found in the relevant section in the case study on FI.

⁵⁵ Ferrari, *Le ragioni del testo*, pp. 143-44.

⁵⁶ Mortara Garavelli, *Prontuario di punteggiatura*, pp. 85-6. On the correspondence between textual comma and prosody see Ferrari, *Le ragioni del testo*, pp. 143-44.

⁵⁷ *Topic* and *comment* are, respectively, what the sentence is about and what is said about the *topic*. *Given information* is what is already known by the interlocutor and *new information* is what is not already known by interlocutor. Subject, topic and given information can overlap, as

guides the reader to acknowledging the subject and the predicate, therefore helping the understanding of the clause.

The use of prosodic commas in predicative nominal clauses or sentences will be a typical feature of FI, especially in the diegetic level and will connote the language of the narrator and, ultimately, of the author. It is therefore remarkable to find an example of prosodic comma also in the diegetic level of PV, in example 12 above: ‘Stamattina, sua telefonata in fretta’. In this case also the comma isolates the topic-given information, ‘Stamattina’, from the comment-new information, ‘sua telefonata in fretta’, marking the closure of an intonational unit.

This last section on the exploration of the syntax and style of PV has aimed to show some expressive uses of punctuation. From cases where punctuation is weaker than expected, giving the impression of a flow of words; to cases where instead strong punctuation marks are frequently used to fragment syntax; to cases where punctuation recreates spoken pauses and intonation. These expressive uses point to two main functions: contributing to a layer of informal *parlato* or concurring in building experimental features.

3.5 Conclusion

The *leitmotiv* of this analysis of PV has been variety: of syntactic structures and of stylistic outcomes. A real mixture of old and new, tradition and experimentation with a key purpose, that of moving away from the forms and language of naturalist and Neorealist novel and starting the quest for a personal style, which could correspond to Arbasino’s idea of the work of art. Although a legacy of Italian literary tradition in some cases still emerged, the main sources of inspiration have been modernism, with its merging of the diegetic and mimetic levels and interior monologue, as well as new stylistic models such as

well as predicate, comment and new information; but it is not always the case. Angela Ferrari, ‘Struttura Tematica’, in *Enciclopedia dell’italiano* (2011), <

cinema and journalism with their objectivity, impersonality and leanness. Let us summarize the main syntactic trends and their stylistic outcomes.

A first important trend sees the creation of a reportage style through the use of short, single-clause, and often nominal sentences. The hyper fragmentation, nominal style and linearity contribute to creating a dynamic, lean, camera eye effect; in some rare cases, but still significant for the weight that this device will assume in later works, the list is used to express these features. In the most experimental parts of reportage, the diegetic and mimetic levels are merged thanks to the use of free indirect or direct speech. The second style identified corresponds to the overflowing monologue: very long and rich sentences where clauses paratactically accumulate one to the other through loose asyndeta and cumulative *e* or textual conjunctions. The structure of these sentences - coordinated clusters of independent+subordinates - is such that does not allow subordination to reach high levels of embedding. As a consequence, the sentence appears of abnormal horizontal extension, although not complex. In these parts the mimetic level is formally distinguished from the diegetic one by inverted commas, yet the two have basically the same syntactic structure. The third trend instead testifies to a legacy of the literary tradition, expressed through rhythmic parataxis and the use of traditionally literary nominal style devices, such as appositions to describe physical appearance. As a result, syntax looks static and flat. This variety of styles is what justifies my labelling of PV as a 'laboratory': a site for the young Arbasino to test his own version of a modern narrative.

Furthermore, the analysis shows that, although each short story has a dominant trend, parts with different stylistic features emerge within the same story, which underlines once again the workshop nature of the work. A common denominator of the stories instead seems to be the recreation of an informal educated *parlato*, made of brachylogic structures, cumulative parataxis, limited variety of subordinating conjunctions, punctuation that allows prosodic factors to emerge, selected phenomena of segmentation of the clause, regional influences, common lexis or even jargon. This dimension is visible across short stories and also within each story in diegesis and mimesis, as a way to merge the two levels. Merging diegesis and mimesis and build an 'uninterrupted discourse' is a means for Arbasino to find an alternative to the Neorealist dialogue and

indeed throughout the stories we find at least three different strategies to represent direct speech: the monologue, free indirect or free direct speech and the quotation within narration with strong authorial control. It was noted that the recreation of spoken language and homogenization of the two levels is not always successful: possibly the least effective strategy in this sense is the quotation within narration, which indeed will be discarded in the following works. On the other hand, a further evidence of the closeness of diegesis and mimesis is the similar syntactic architecture: overall mimesis has only a slightly less elaborate and complex structure than diegesis.

In the comparison with contemporary Italian and corpora of spoken and written language the syntax of PV shows deviation from the standard as far as the length and composition of the sentence are concerned. This happens for both the diegetic and mimetic levels in three stories out of five (*Giorgio* above all, *Distesa* and *Luglio*). By contrast, the depth of the sentence remains within the range of *italiano contemporaneo*, even in the longest and richest sentences and in mimesis. From these elements, we can conclude that Arbasino's experimentation on macro-syntactic structures shows itself in an increase in length and number of clauses, and not in more complex sentences.

In conclusion, we can see the short stories of PV as a creative set of variations on the theme of realism, proposed in opposition to the previous modes of representation of reality. Or as a sort of toolkit to choose from for following works. The next step will be then to investigate which of these variations are chosen by Arbasino and how they are developed.

4 Case study 2. *Il ragazzo perduto*: A Stylistic Turning Point

Invece a me raccontare la storia e basta è ancora la cosa che interessa meno; e se la do via senza accompagnarla con una critica aperta mi sembra perfino di non soddisfare il cliente.
Arbasino, *Il ragazzo perduto*, p. 415

RP is the text analysed in this second case study. It firstly appeared in 1959 in a collection of short stories entitled *L'Anonimo Lombardo*, which included the short stories previously published in PV plus others unpublished, all by Arbasino. Although included in a collection of short stories, RP is more appropriately a novel, and indeed as a stand-alone piece it appears in all of its subsequent editions, under the title *L'Anonimo Lombardo*, which is how it is better known nowadays.¹ The inclusion of RP in a collection seems to be due to the fear of an exaggerated attention from gossip magazines or even censorship, because of its homosexual theme, which in 1950s Italy could have distracted readers from other features of the novel, which were more important for Arbasino. In the back cover of the 1966 edition of *L'Anonimo Lombardo*, the first where the novel appears as a stand-alone piece, Arbasino declares:

Questo romanzetto è stato scritto nell'estate 1955; ma per quanto lo facessi circolare nel milieu letterario subito (e con una certa larghezza) non l'ho pubblicato che quattro anni più tardi - e nella raccolta completa di tutti i miei racconti di allora. Mi parevano tempi molto brutti: certamente più antipatici di quelli che attraversiamo adesso. Insomma temevo (e non volevo) che fra i tanti equivoci ristagnanti nella stagione del Contenutismo Malinteso, un libro (che è, appunto, un 'libro') potesse scioccamente trasformarsi in un 'caso': rotocalchesco, o peggio.²

In fact, although published together with Arbasino's first short stories and written in the same years ('estate 1955'), RP is a longer and, most importantly, more complex text than the stories of PV: it represents a step forward in terms of narrative, structural, and linguistic choices, which justifies its independence from previous works.

¹ Subsequent editions of the novel appeared in 1966, 1973 and 1996, all with the title *L'Anonimo Lombardo*, with some variants compared to *Il ragazzo perduto*. In this case study I will always refer to this work as RP, since it is the 1959 version of the novel I am examining here.

² Alberto Arbasino, *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Raffaele Manica, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2009), I, 1367.

If the short stories of PV were a laboratory where Arbasino experimented different styles and narrative forms alternative to those of the Neorealist period, RP marks a clear turn in the direction of experimentalism, and more specifically of the anti-novel. Hybridity of genres, self-reflexivity, anachronisms, footnotes, quotations are all present and intertwined in RP, bringing to the deconstruction of the traditional novel and of its naturalist, linear narrative. The main themes of this work are indeed the writing process that led to the existence of the work itself, as well as the idea that the work of art is the result of a collage of quotations from other works. All of it is however insinuated within a story that is deeply realistic, rooted in the Lombard *media borghesia* and in the Italian socio-cultural situation of 1955. Let us take a closer look at its structure, narrative technique and genres.

Insofar as self-reflexivity is concerned, I can mention the three levels of narration displayed in the novel. The 'main text' (i.e. the text without footnotes and paratext) of RP is an epistolary novel, written in first person by the narrator and protagonist, an unspecified Anonimo 1955. Letters are mainly addressed to a certain Emilio, and talk about the affair of the protagonist - an educated, *medio borghese* Lombard university student - with Roberto. As the novel progresses, however, we realise that another level of narration emerges, set in a different spatial-temporal dimension: the protagonist is still the Anonimo who, after the end of his affair with Roberto, communicates to Emilio his difficulties in writing the story called *Il ragazzo perduto*. References to the affair in the past and to the novel itself ('questa storia', 'questo punto [della storia]'; 'questo racconto epistolare'; 'questo racconto') make us aware of the presence of the second level, which appears confusingly mixed with the first one until letter XXVIII. Here the second level of narration is plainly revealed as the narrator informs us about the structure of the novel we are reading, declaring 'questa storia intitolata *Il ragazzo perduto*' to be at an end and that a second part has begun. In this second part, further developments of the affair will be told 'privatamente, in via confidenziale' from the perspective of the second level narrator.³ Moreover, hints of a third level of narration are also present: in letter XI the narrator claims to be 'l'autore della storia di uno scrittore in difficoltà'

³ RP, pp. 414-15.

and refers to RP as ‘racconto nel racconto’, ironically recognizing the ‘Chinese box game’ and promising that he will not go further.⁴

This third level emerges more clearly in the interaction between text and paratext, and allows the reader to identify the ‘author’ as Arbasino himself, through a subtle play of allusions. After the title of the work, but before the text starts, a foreword signed ‘A.A.’, thus Alberto Arbasino, warns us that he is not the author of the work: its manuscript arrived by post, signed by an Anonimo 1955, and Arbasino only slightly edited it.⁵ This type of ‘fictional’ or ‘ludic’ preface, where the real author pretends to be just the editor of the text, and the use of the *topos* of the anonymously written manuscript, are devices that have a long tradition in literature, and in Italy they essentially point to the father of Italian novel: Alessandro Manzoni.⁶ Arbasino, with this preface and the *topos* of the found manuscript, is not certainly re-using nineteenth century worn-out devices in earnest, but quotes them in order to reveal from the beginning the fictional game of the novel: the pseudo-editor is in reality the author, and the author is Arbasino/Anonimo, exactly as it happens in *I promessi sposi*. Surely a further confirmation of this game of cross-references is the fact that the first footnote appearing in RP is presented as a ‘nota dell’editore’, yet the text of the footnote is a quotation from Manzoni’s introduction to *I promessi sposi*. Furthermore, in RP, since the Anonimo is also the first-person narrator and protagonist, the three levels can overlap and merge: a playful clue to the blurring among levels is the abbreviated signature which ends one of the letters, ‘A.’, which stands for ‘Anonimo’, but could also stand for ‘Alberto’.

Besides elucidating the playful *mise en abyme* performed in the text, the paratext is also the place where the quoting game emerges. We saw how in the short stories of PV there are already signs of it, with allusions, imitations or direct references to other works and authors within the text or in the titles. In RP, instead, quotations are not disguised in the text: they are presented in the

⁴ ‘Questo scrittore non sono più io: io a questo punto sono l’autore della storia di uno scrittore in difficoltà. Fermiamoci qui con i giochetti a incastro e le scatole cinesi [...]’. RP, pp. 340-41.

⁵ ‘Avvertenza. Questa storia non è mia. È arrivata per posta, da parte di un Anonimo Lombardo 1955, che poi è morto. C’erano tante note. Le abbiamo tolte quasi tutte. (A.A.)’. RP, p. 307.

⁶ The preface used in RP falls into the category of the ‘disavowing authorial prefaces’ as classified by Gérard Genette. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin, ed. by Richard Macksey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 280-82.

form of footnotes lying at the bottom of the page, to which parts of the text refer. Footnotes-quotations have two functions: the first is of parodic comment on the parts of the text to which they are pegged. Thus, they form a counter-text that lyricizes every-day life situations or ironically cools down pathetic moments. This is due either to the literary language and poetic theme of the quotation contrasting with the common language and 'low' situation of the text (usually concerning sex), or to the comic content of the footnote contrasting with the seriousness of the text. An example of the latter is:⁷

Grazie a loro dici che non hai mai avuto dubbi sulle tue vocazioni, sulla strada da prendere. È una certezza che non ti invidio. Io preferisco TORMENTARMI PER IL SOLO FATTO DI ESISTERE,⁷² non rinuncerei a questa inquietudine che mi ha tracassato spaventosamente una volta e non mi lascerà mai, come un pungolo o come un lievito.

⁷² Ah, strappa-coeur! Gregori-maccaron!
T'hoo cognossuu, gambetta, ficcanàs,
Te see on Romantegh, beccamort, ciccion,
che no te voeu stà ai regol de Parnas!
CARLO PORTA, Per el matrimoni del Sciur Cont Don Gabriell Verr (figlio di Pietro e Alessandro Verri) con la Sciura Contessina Donna Giustina Borromea, 105-108.

The second function of footnotes-quotations is to plainly reveal the hidden quotation in the text: in the footnote we find the passage from which Arbasino is quoting without inverted commas. For example:⁸

Ma già non ero più libero di ignorare la presenza di un ragazzo di capelli nerissimi e largo di spalle né il suo sguardo che mi fissava, non potevo sottrarmi alla pressione delle dure linee del suo corpo,⁸ come se la folla che si accalcava per vedere ci spingesse l'uno addosso all'altro.

⁸ Il me poussa dans un coin sombre et, si je ne pouvais plus voir le trouble de son visage, je n'étais déjà plus libre d'ignorer les grandes et dures lignes d'un corps jeune, impatient de jouer... (*Les liaisons buissonnières*)

Thus, the footnotes are the underlying text, showing what the text is really made of, that is, quotations.⁹

⁷ RP, p. 363.

⁸ RP, p. 319.

In both their functions, footnotes-quotations represent a ‘criticism’ of the main text, or in general of naturalistic narration: through the reification of literary discourse, they show that the object of literature is literature itself; moreover, they point to the stereotypical character of mimetic representations of feelings or common events, such as love, desperation, the unfolding of a love story. In other words, they say that literary language, in order to represent reality, cannot but repeat, i.e. quote, what has already been said, thus cannot but resort to stereotypes. Having realised this, it is easy to find references, allusions, quotations, parodies from other works everywhere else: for example, the choice of the epistolary genre to narrate a badly ended affair, a parody of Foscolo and Goethe’s epistolary novels. Other examples are the name of the addressee, Emilio, which points to the writer Carlo Emilio Gadda (indeed in one letter the opening formula ‘Caro Emilio’ becomes ‘Carlo Emilio’), and the use of footnotes which recalls Gadda’s *L’Adalgisa*. The plot itself is, according to Arbasino, inspired by Lombard Enlightenment and Romantic authors pre-1850, that is why most quotations are from Parini, Manzoni, Porta, brothers Verri, and from melodrama.¹⁰

Practically, with RP *realismo critico* acquires a more evident weight, although Arbasino will only theorize it in *Certi romanzi* nine years later. In RP we see clearly his attempt to insert himself into a lineage of modern authors whose works have open and circular structures, are self-reflexive, incorporate different ‘material’ in the text (quotations, allusions, rewritings of other works or from the world). As we saw in the first chapter, the critique of Neorealism is contained in RP itself, in the parts where the narrator reflects on the Italian literary and cultural situation, which intertwine with the fictional parts and can be ascribed to the essay genre. These essayistic parts represent therefore another element that conveys a criticism of reality and contributes to the deconstruction of naturalistic novel. First of all, they are a critical reflection on

⁹ Arbasino, in the postface to the 1973 edition of *L’Anonimo Lombardo*, remarkably affirms that the main text ‘serv[e] come mero supporto per le note, che costituiscono il vero romanzo, però sono costituite, per lo più, da materiali prepubblicati e altrui’. Alberto Arbasino, ‘Nota 1973’, in *Romanzi e racconti*, I, 1373-78 (p. 1375).

¹⁰ ‘E la sua “trama” è un Riaggancio con una Tradizione Perduta – ovvero: saltando via a occhi chiusi il secolo “inservibile” 1850-1950, quando la nostra cultura sembra diventata improvvisamente cretina, una spasimante “ripresa di contatto” con una Grande Tradizione Italiana, probabilmente ipotetica, ma prevalentemente lombarda, nei suoi due estremi sussulti, *percées* affascinanti e maestose: l’Illuminismo cosmopolita e scienziante, il più delirante Romanticismo lirico’. Arbasino, ‘Nota 1973’, p. 1374.

the current cultural and literary situation. Then, their presence within a work of fiction critiques the linear narrative of naturalistic novels, and, finally, they represent a meta-criticism on the novel in which they are inserted, insofar as they explain the poetics it is grounded on.

Language occupies an important place in the implementation of Arbasino's idea of the novel. In particular, he often talks about the recreation of the sound of *parlato* as a means to effectively represent reality, in opposition to the use of literary language in narrative and dialect or *italiano popolare* in dialogues of Neorealist novels: 'rendere in maniera plausibile il suono, proprio il "rumore" della conversazione, per rappresentare la realtà che ci circonda'.¹¹ Indeed, debris of literary language that still survived in PV will be wiped away in RP: the basis is the informal and spoken language of *media borghesia*, which features colloquial terms or devices but does not substantially deviate from grammatical correctness, in keeping with the social environment depicted. Always in line with the language of the educated and cosmopolitan young protagonist, we find some foreign terms (Gallicisms, Anglo-Americanisms), technical terms of scientific language (especially to express denotatively sexual behaviours), and jargon. On the other hand, although Arbasino does not explicitly talk about them, it is possible to identify cases of reification of linguistic stereotypes, of syntactic fragmentation, of patent breaks with the standard in a way that points to Arbasino's experimental, self-reflexive and critical approach to the construction of narrative.

My purpose in this case study is to identify where the syntax of RP is in line and where it breaks with contemporary Italian and literary language, and explore the various connotations that syntactic choices assume in this work, either in the direction of a recreation of spoken language or of experimentalism. This will be done by comparing RP with corpora of written and spoken language, as well as with PV and other contemporary works, such as Pratolini's *Cronache di poveri amanti* (1947) and Gadda's *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de Via Merulana* (1957). The choice of these two works reflects the fact that they belong to opposite stylistic poles, the former Neorealist and the latter expressionist. The qualitative analysis, besides exploring syntax, will focus also on parenthetical

¹¹ RP, p. 380.

clauses, nominal style and punctuation, and how they contribute to conveying a spoken effect or, on the other hand, introduce elements of self-reflexivity or criticism. The text does not have a mimetic level and therefore there will not be the usual distinction between diegesis and mimesis. There will be however a distinction between ‘argumentative text’, i.e. the essayistic parts, where the narrator elaborates his thesis on the Italian cultural and literary situation, and ‘narrative text’, i.e. the fictional parts, where the narrator tells about the affair and where all the metanarrative speculations take place. We will also investigate whether there are meaningful differences between the fictional and essayistic parts.

4.1 General Aspects of the Structure of the Sentence

Here we will look at more general aspects of the structure of the sentence, i.e. its length and composition, through which we can start to form an idea about the specificity of this work.

4.1.1 Length

Let us take a look at data concerning the length of the sentence in RP:

Table 4-1 – Length RP

| | RP |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Average n. of words per sentence | 39.63 |
| Short sentences (1-15 words) | 40.32% |
| Medium sentences (16-30 words) | 23.39% |
| Medium-long sentences (31-45 words) | 7.26% |
| Long sentences (46-60 words) | 8.87% |
| Very long sentences (over 60 words) | 20.16% |

The very first datum, the average number of words per sentence, is very striking: 39.6. It is a very high average, and already quite telling in terms of linguistic and stylistic choices, both when compared to data offered by other contemporary literary texts and to Arbasino’s previous work PV. The average of RP points at a clear break with the averages found in corpora of literary texts: we can recall that Policarpi and Rombi indicate 17.5 as the average length of the

sentence in narrative, while for De Mauro the threshold of 25 words per sentence is exceeded only by a few writers. Thus, in RP Arbasino is stretching the sentence far beyond what is the standard average for the genre. The gap is even wider if we compare RP to a text representative of the Neorealist period such as Pratolini's *Cronache di poveri amanti* (1947), which presents an average of 13.57 words per sentence: quite typical for Neorealist text, usually composed of short sentences.¹² This gap appears also quite significant, since it suggests that one of the ways to put some distance (in numeric and metaphoric terms) between the Neorealist style and his own is for Arbasino to construct longer sentences. To further confirm this, we can compare RP with a key text of the expressionist style, Gadda's *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de Via Merulana* (1957): 37.1 words per sentence, which is a much closer average to RP than *Cronache di poveri amanti* as the table concisely shows:

Table 4-2 – Length: Comparison RP, Cronache, Pasticciaccio

| | RP | Cronache | Pasticciaccio |
|----------------------------------|-------|----------|---------------|
| Average n. of words per sentence | 39.63 | 13.57 | 37.1 |

Thus, the datum of the average seems to point to the tendency to get close to experimental texts, which as we saw tend to develop the sentence horizontally, i.e. to write longer sentences as a sign of break with the standard.

The comparison with the previous work, PV, confirms that there is a development towards the increase in the average:

Table 4-3 – Length: Comparison PV, RP

| | PV diegesis | RP |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Average n. of words per sentence | 20.43 | 39.63 |
| Short sentences (1-15 words) | 60.98% | 40.32% |
| Medium sentences (16-30 words) | 21.54% | 23.39% |
| Medium-long sentences (31-45 words) | 6.1% | 7.26% |
| Long sentences (46-60 words) | 4.88% | 8.87% |
| Very long sentences (over 60 words) | 6.5% | 20.16% |

¹² Corti, 'Tre "campi di tensioni"', pp. 80-5.

As well as the large increase in average length, the data clearly show the strong reduction of short sentences from PV to RP and on the other hand the increase in medium-long, long and especially very long sentences in RP. As we know from the previous case study, data of PV blend together those of five short stories quite different syntactically, some of which already had high or very high averages of words per sentence (*Distesa*, 29.4, and *Giorgio*, 52.9) and percentages of very long sentences. We could say that RP continues on the line of extended sentences found in these stories, *Distesa* and *Giorgio*; more similarities will indeed surface in the analysis in particular with *Giorgio*.

In RP, very long sentences represent 20.2% of the total, the second highest percentage among all of Arbasino's early works, only second to *Giorgio*. However, the relative majority still goes to short sentences, which represent 40.3% of all sentences, followed by medium sentences, which represent 23.4%. A contrasting profile of the general structure of the sentence seems therefore to emerge, with 83.9% of the sentences made of short, medium and very long sentences. How are various lengths distributed on the page? Are they assigned to specific functions according to the type of text?

Very long sentences for example appear both in narrative and argumentative parts, but with different functions. In the narrative parts, they can have an emotional content, and their length tends to recreate a burst of joy or desperation. The typology is the same as that already found in the short story of PV *Giorgio*, with clauses accumulating paratactically, use of punctuation weaker than expected, and mimesis of spoken informality:

- (1) o Roberto, **mio caro, mio grande, mio unico amore**, questi giorni sempre più disperati non passano mai, prima non riuscivo a rendermene conto, e adesso dall'**immensità** di questo dolore **capisco l'immensità** del bene che ti voglio, questo amore che è stato così lento a mettersi in moto e alla fine è cresciuto fino a riempir tutta la mia vita, **capisco l'immensità** di quello che **ho perso** perdendo te, è come se mi avessero strappato il cuore, e questa vita la sento improvvisamente vuota e senza scopo, non c'è più ragione di vivere, o di lavorare o di studiare, per chi lo faccio adesso? non vedo davanti a me altro che una fila di giorni spaventosamente uguali, **desolati e deserti**, mi sento solo al mondo perché **ho perso** tutto [...] (pp. 409-10)

This is an extreme example, not quoted here in its entirety, which counts four hundred and five words: the whole letter is composed of one very long sentence. We can notice the similarities with example 2 from *Giorgio* in the case study on PV, from the pathetic tone conveyed by repetitions, climax and worn-out expressions to the layer of informal Italian (apocope 'riempir', dislocation 'questa vita la sento'), to the clauses added one to the other mainly through comma or the conjunction *e*.

Not all of the very long sentences in the narrative part have this function of conveying a strong emotion and therefore mimicking the uninterrupted narrative flow of a person who is in the grip of excitement, despair, discontent. There are others where the narrator assumes a more rational attitude, telling episodes that concern his affair with Roberto and elaborating on his partner's behaviour. The structure remains linear, based on coordination of independent clauses; yet often linearity is broken by parentheses:

- (2) *Vedi*, Emilio, a me piace moltissimo fare l'amore, e non saprei più fare a meno dei pomeriggi in via Proust, è un ritmo certo intenso ma lo sostengo splendidamente, Roberto stesso - **che è un insaziabile** - ne è soddisfatto, *vedi*, è riuscita pienamente l'intesa - **proprio** - solo 'fisiologica' che si è stabilita fra noi, con tutto quel che dicevo prima R. mi eccita ancora spaventosamente - ... tutto questo è un necessario cappello per dire poi: va bene, la cosa mi piace, anche tanto, ma uscito dal bagno in via Proust non sento più il bisogno di farne oggetto di discorsi e commenti. Basta. Roberto no. (p. 350 my italics)

The sentence is composed of a linear sequence of independent clauses plus their subordinates, coordinated one to other mainly through comma. Linearity is however broken by the insertion of two parentheses, the former a non-restrictive relative clause adding a specification and the latter an adverb with an emphasizing function. Besides breaking the smooth linear flow of the sentence and inserting an element of convolution, parentheses add words to the sentence, contributing to expanding it. In the second half of the sentence the hyphen and suspension points ('- ... tutto questo'), keep the sentence open to the addition of more clauses. Here a stronger punctuation mark - possibly a full stop - would have been more normally expected, to distinguish more clearly from a logical-syntactic point of view the premise (the satisfactory sexual life of the couple) from the main statement (the fact that the narrator does not feel the need to talk about it), signalled by the anaphoric 'tutto questo'. However, quite

contrastingly, at the end of the passage there is a switch from an absence of adequate punctuation to an emphatic punctuation as testified by the two very short sentences isolated and highlighted by full stops: 'Basta. Roberto no'. These two sentences could have simply been absorbed by the very long sentence that precedes, instead they are separated to convey a higher communicative impact and create contrasting rhythms - flowing and broken - with the preceding sentence.

In the narrative parts, the alternation of different lengths and the consequent 'accordion effect' (oscillation of long and short measure) is quite common. By contrast, in the argumentative parts sentences tend towards the medium-long and long measure with very few short sentences and not many variations in rhythm. Here we find especially monotonous sequences of very long sentences, through which the argumentation develops, as in the following passage, formed of three sentences of one-hundred and twenty-three, fifty-two, and seventy-one words each:

- (3) La prova migliore è che non si sentono raccontare poi troppi fatti relativi a sfere diverse da quelle della zappa e della bicicletta - ma naturalmente non bisogna mai trascurare la circostanza che l'italiano, **fisiologicamente, è anche scarso di immaginazione ed è congenitamente incapace di concepire trame e di orchestrare sviluppi** in opere narrative; perciò la produzione di romanzi è tanto stentata da noi, e si capisce anche come mai riescano bene generalmente le 'opere prime', dove uno mette tutta la propria esperienza e tutto quello che sa; riesca già meno bene il secondo libro, dove, volere o no, bisogna cominciare a far lavorare la fantasia per inventare qualche cosa di nuovo; e il terzo libro, o è un disastro o non nasce. // Si spiega anche un certo successo all'estero di prodotti di natura para-letteraria, abilmente arrangiati dai traduttori, e che hanno una fortuna dovuta a ragioni soprattutto [sic] turistiche o folkloristiche o di nostalgia sentimentale, come se fossero cartoline, dépliants degli enti di soggiorno, torri di Pisa d'alabastro, foulards di seta stampata. // Si spiega ancora come mai tanti autori si rifugino nel bozzettismo regionale, trattato in un linguaggio che è dialettale sia per scelta di vocaboli che per struttura grammaticale e sintattica - e sia pure conformemente alle immancabili illustri tradizioni che stanno dietro a ciascun dialetto - si spiega la inesistenza di una 'vera' koinè letteraria, e la straordinaria distanza fra la lingua veramente parlata e la lingua convenzionalmente scritta... si spiegano tante cose. (pp. 359-60)

As we can see these sentences are very different from the emotional ones of the narrative parts. The feeling of overflowing, uncontrolled emotion conveyed by the accumulation of clauses and weak punctuation marks is replaced by a clear

and logical organization of complex thoughts, helped by the use of parallelism, logical-syntactic punctuation, correlative structures and anaphora (underlined) that keep the sentence and the text cohesive. There is, for example, the anaphora of 'si spiega', repeated at the beginning and within the second and third sentences. It allows the reader to refer back to the textual conjunction with deductive-conclusive value 'perciò' in the first sentence, and therefore to see the last two sentences as consequences depending on the thesis exposed in the first sentence ('l'italiano, fisiologicamente, è anche scarso di immaginazione ed è congenitamente incapace [...]'). We can say then that, while in the emotional sentences the lightness of an informal spoken discourse is recreated, here the control and planning typical of written text emerges.¹³ What is common to both, however, is the tendency to expand the sentence. In the argumentative parts this is achieved through the introduction of parentheses and orderly list (in bold). Parentheses break linearity and, in particular if they are long, they can compromise readability. We will see in the sections on coordination and subordination how complex these sentences actually are; but first we can take a look at a complementary aspect to length, the composition of the sentence.

4.1.2 Composition of the Sentence

The following table refers to the composition of the sentence of RP:

Table 4-4 – Composition RP

| | RP |
|---|--------|
| Average no. of clauses per sentence | 6.73 |
| % of single-clause sentences | 22.76% |
| % of two-clause sentences | 16.26% |
| % of three-clause sentences | 10.57% |
| % of sentences with more than 3 clauses | 50.41% |

¹³ Wallace Chafe talks about the difference between spoken and written language in terms of 'fragmentation' vs 'integration': spoken language strings together what he calls 'idea units' (i.e. linguistic 'spurts' corresponding to a single clause) without connectives or through coordinating conjunctions, whereas written language is able to integrate into the idea unit more elements, such as a variety of subordinate clauses and phrases. He suggests that integration is possible thanks to the greater amount of time available when writing, while spoken language is faster and does not usually allow integration. Wallace Chafe, 'Integration and Involvement in Speaking, Writing and Oral Literature', in *Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy*, ed. by Deborah Tannen (Norwood N.J.: Ablex, 1982), pp. 35-53 (pp. 37-45).

These data support what we have seen for length, that is, a remarkable horizontal extension of the sentence in RP, unlike the tendency to simplification of contemporary Italian. Sentences with more than three clauses are the majority, 50.4%; and the average number of clauses, 6.7, shows that many of these multiple-clause sentences have a high number of clauses. The comparison with data provided by other corpora can confirm that RP moves away from the averages of literary texts. As we saw before, Policarpi-Rombi's corpus reports an average of three clauses per sentence for literary texts, while data I have collected show that not only RP decisively moves away from the Neorealist novel *Cronache*, but that it also has a higher average than Gadda's *Pasticciaccio*:

Table 4-5 – Composition: Comparison RP, *Cronache*, *Pasticciaccio*

| | RP | <i>Cronache</i> | <i>Pasticciaccio</i> |
|-------------------------------------|------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Average no. of clauses per sentence | 6.73 | 2.42 | 4.72 |

The comparison with PV shows that the sentence in RP has become richer in clauses:

Table 4-6 – Composition: Comparison PV, RP

| | PV diegesis | RP |
|---|-------------|--------|
| Average no. of clauses per sentence | 3.56 | 6.73 |
| % of single-clause sentences | 40.17% | 22.76% |
| % of two-clause sentences | 16.74% | 16.26% |
| % of three-clause sentences | 11.72% | 10.57% |
| % of sentences with more than 3 clauses | 31.38% | 50.41% |

The average has increased notably, and the percentages indicate that, while two-clause and three-clause sentences remain almost unvaried, single-clause sentences have decreased (minus 17.4%) and multiple-clause increased (plus 19%) from PV to RP. Both in PV and RP, data show a tendency to work on two extreme poles, multiple-clause and single-clause sentences, but with the weightings inverted between the two texts. Let us now move to the qualitative analysis.

For the composition of the sentence we can also find differences between what we labelled as the narrative and argumentative parts. In the narrative parts, the highest number of clauses coincides, as we have seen before with regard to word count, with the passages where the narrator tells about his affair with more emotional involvement. For example, the moments in which he notices Roberto for the first time (eleven clauses) and when he talks about the ecstatic glances he casts at him and his progressive falling in love with him (twenty-three clauses). Then, when he describes his feelings while he was talking to Roberto for the first time (thirty-five clauses), up to the abnormal number of clauses of the sentence where he expresses his desperation for the end of the affair (one-hundred and fifteen clauses). These are alternated with sentences with fewer clauses and in some cases the contrast is sharp, as in the following passage, where the overflowing ‘emotional’ sentence of thirty-five clauses is framed by sentences of a more rational tone composed of one or two clauses. Because length and composition in this case overlap, i.e. sentences with a small number of clauses are short in length and vice versa, they produce the same alternating rhythm we were talking about in the previous section:

- (4) **E così** abbiamo parlato, **poi** abbiamo sentito il resto dell’opera, dal momento che proprio per quello ero venuto lì, e non volevo perderla; c’è nel secondo atto una bellissima aria per mezzosoprano, tanto gluckiana, con accompagnamento per violoncello solo, che però in quella edizione era sostituito dal fagotto. Molto bene, ti dirò. Però ho l’impressione di non aver certo seguito benissimo la musica e il palcoscenico. Una rabbia... **Ma** io mi sentivo già in pieno romanzo, guarda qui come può ridursi uno che pure aspira a fare il raziocinante, **e** lo guardavo sognando, *ma davvero*, mi sentivo altro che separato da ‘tutto il resto dell’uditorio’, dalla Scala, dal mondo, **e** le luci si riaccendessero, si potevano udir meraviglie, cambiare le scene, finire l’opera, gli applausi clamorosi non mi toccavano: ‘avulso dal contesto’, come niente; pensa che ci sedevamo sui divanini a parlare, **e** non riesco a ricordare che cosa abbiamo detto, ma, *ti assicuro*, neanche una parola, **comunque** abbiamo scoperto di essere compagni della stessa università, dove non c’eravamo mai visti, non ci viene mai, è matricola, **e** io non mi sono sentito più solo, **anzi**, pensavo ‘io non mi sentirò mai più solo, mai più’ era bella, *sai*, la sua voce all’orecchio, calda, profonda, come quella dell’attore Tedeschi, pensavo ‘è lui il mio, sarà sempre lui’, **poi** sai bene che alla fine sono dovuto correr via subito, **e così** ci siamo dati un appuntamento per il giorno dopo. Ti racconterò. (p. 321)

I have underlined the single and two-clause sentences that precede and follow the thirty-five-clause sentence. We can observe the broken style of what

precedes: ‘Molto bene, ti dirò’ and ‘Però ho l’impressione [...]’ would be part of the sentence ‘E così abbiamo parlato [...]’ (which is also broken), yet they are isolated and highlighted by full stops. Then, after the broken style the running style of the very long sentence follows, where a high number of clauses are added one to the other through asyndeton and textual conjunctions (in bold). As we will see in the next section, it is easy to lose track of the syntactic links between clauses in these types of sentences, indeed because of the loose coordination.

The effect sought here is clearly that of mimicking the flow of a spoken monologue, and its rather unplanned, uncontrolled character; the spoken nature is revealed also by the high number of interactive discourse markers disseminated throughout the sentence (‘ti assicuro’, ‘sai’, etc.). Finally, the single-clause sentence ‘Ti racconterò’ brings the fluidity of the previous sentence to a stop and re-establishes a broken pattern. It is what Martignoni calls ‘dosaggio oculato dei ritmi sintattici impegnati a evocare ora fluidità, ora accelerazioni, ora fratture’.¹⁴ However, this ‘dosaggio oculato dei ritmi’ not only evokes the fluidity and fragmentation of spoken discourses, but it can also be linked to the writing of other famous Lombard and ‘irregular’ writers, Gadda and Dossi, much admired by Arbasino.¹⁵ As Matt points out, in all of Gadda’s works syntax is ‘caratterizzata dall’alternanza di moduli antitetici’, so much so that Pasolini once described it as follows: ‘spesso un periodone enorme (mai però simmetrico!) è seguito da un periodetto cortissimo’.¹⁶ Moreover, also in Dossi’s *L’altrieri* (1868) and *Vita di Alberto Pisani* (1870) we find very similar combinations of long and short sentences, sometimes very long and very short.¹⁷ Although Arbasino declared that he had not read Dossi yet at the time of the writing of RP, these consonances tell us that it is possible to find similarities in

¹⁴ Martignoni, ‘Arbasino: la coerenza della complessità’, p. 11.

¹⁵ Gadda is openly quoted in RP as one of the favourite authors. As we said already, he defined himself Gadda’s ‘nipotino’; in 2008 he also devoted a book to Gadda, *L’ingegnere in blu*. To testify the long-life admiration for Dossi, Arbasino in 1999 has edited and introduced a selection of works by the author, while in 2014 he has published a book entitled *Ritratti italiani*, probably an allusion to Dossi’s *Ritratti umani*.

¹⁶ Matt, *Gadda*, p. 23. Pasolini’s quotation from *Passione e ideologia*, 1973, in Matt, *Gadda*, p. 23.

¹⁷ ‘un fluire diseguale, intermittente, che a tratti si arresta per fare silenzio intorno a sé, per dare alla parola, alla battuta, alla frase, una risonanza e un’intensità più profonda [...]. Oppure invece del silenzio, si vuole ricreare [...] l’indugio su particolari, emozioni, eventi, che sembrano dilatare la successione delle parole’, Caputo, *Sintassi e dialogo nella narrativa di Carlo Dossi*, pp. 21-22.

the way of structuring the sentence of experimental writers.¹⁸ Finally, we can say that the allusion to Gadda (and maybe behind Gadda, Dossi) fits very well with the idea of the literary work composed of other literary works embodied by RP.

Broken sentences are a feature of the narrative parts, and they help to achieve the rhythmic ‘fractures’ just mentioned. They are key elements of the general structure of the sentence of RP, so much so that the incipit of the novel features a broken sentence. They also interact with other rhythmic elements, underlining the importance of rhythm in Arbasino’s writing:

- (5) Caratteristico del suo animo femminile è che per raffigurare il suo ideale in pieno dovrei essere una specie di eroe da film in costume, corteggiarlo, dominarlo, difenderlo dai nemici. Probabilmente con la spada in pugno, come Errol Flynn. Lo studio, lo interrogo, peso le sue parole, vaglio le sue reazioni. E ho imparato molto. Ma mi rifiuto di tenerne conto. Non rinuncio alle mie convinzioni. E della loro bontà dovrà pure convincersi. Povero Roberto, vedo che fa sforzi, l’amore glie li [sic] fa fare, per entrare nel mio ordine di idee. E non gli riesce. (p. 350)

The number of broken sentences (highlighted) is very high in this passage. Not only: the presence of other non-broken, but short, sentences make the entire passage in broken style. What is noticeable, however, is the combination of syntactic fragmentation with abundant repetitions and parallelisms: *isocola* or *tricola* featuring homeoteleuton (‘corteggiarlo, dominarlo, difenderlo’) and anaphora (‘lo studio, lo interrogo’, etc.); alliterations (‘E ho imparato molto. Ma mi rifiuto di tenerne conto. Non rinuncio alle mie convinzioni. E della loro bontà dovrà pure convincersi’); repetition of words with the same root (*convinzioni, convincersi*). The passage is highly rhythmical, both syntactically and rhetorically planned. It is worth mentioning that after this passage two very long sentences - of fourteen and sixteen clauses respectively - follow, to underline once again the choice of presenting contrasts in these parts.

In the argumentative parts the richness of the sentence is enhanced: there are fewer extremes than in the narrative parts, and multiple-clause sentences substantially increase, to the detriment of single-clause sentences. Multiple-

¹⁸ ‘L’analisi (per me, molto tardiva) del Dossi (Primo Grande Assente da questo romanzo), semmai, potrebbe riconfermare con illustrazioni numerose e precise una ‘costante’ piuttosto inquietante [...]’, Arbasino, ‘Nota 1973’, pp. 1375-76.

clause sentences correspond to very long ones and have a different function here, as they are less the formal equivalent of an uncontrolled, emotional confession and more the heart-felt but lucid and closely argued personal point of view on the situation of Italian culture, as we have seen in the passage quoted in the section on length (example 3). Sequences of sentences with sixteen, twenty, eight, nineteen, sixteen, twenty-three clauses can be found in these parts, without the alternation of rhythms of the narrative parts. The only time where single-clauses appear are where the narrator is asking himself rhetorical questions that add emphasis to the argumentation:

- (6) Dove si svolge? Generalmente non è detto. E anonimi non meno degli sfondi riescono i personaggi. Che cosa fanno? Perché? Quali sono i moventi? A cosa servono questi fiumi di finto dialogato? Ma è una finzione falsissima, più stucchevole della vecchia Arcadia. (p. 357)

These parts appear more dynamic also thanks to the appearance of some broken sentences. We can note in passing the use of free direct speech, connoting the monologue as a continued mimesis of the narrator's language.¹⁹

In summary, the analysis of the general profile of the sentence has revealed that RP goes clearly towards the horizontal extension of the sentence, both in terms of number of words and number of clauses. The long and rich sentences of RP are not in line with the tendency of contemporary Italian; moreover, they move away from the averages of contemporary literary texts. The fact that RP shows a great expansion of the sentence compared to an exemplar Neorealist text, *Cronache di poveri amanti*, and a tendency to get nearer to the averages of an exemplar expressionist text, *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*, shows that Arbasino is trying to put some distance between Neorealist works and his, and that his tendency is to go towards the syntactic profile of experimental works. Also with respect to the general data of PV, RP increases very long and multiple-clause sentences and is thus closer to experimental short stories like *Giorgio*.

¹⁹ Bice Mortara Garavelli, *La parola d'altri: prospettive di analisi del discorso* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2009), pp. 91-2.

With the qualitative analysis, differences between what we labelled as narrative and argumentative text have emerged. In the narrative parts of the text, there is a quest for rhythmic changes: long vs short, multiple-clause vs single-clause, running style vs broken style. Moreover, very long sentences tend to recreate a tone of emotional spoken confession, whereas in argumentative parts they are the place where a coherent reasoning takes place. Here the written nature surfaces more clearly, and sentences are oriented even more towards the long measure, generally without short and highlighted sentences. Changes in length and composition, besides being a way to recreate the rhythm of an excited narration or of a more rational reflection, link back Arbasino to other ‘irregular’ writers who also used alternation of long and brief sentences, such as Gadda or Dossi. In this sense, they can be seen as part of that quoting game evident throughout the novel.

Let us now take a look at the internal structure of the sentence.

4.2 Syntactic Links inside the Sentence: Coordination and Subordination

In this section, I will explore the nature of links inside sentences composed of two or more clauses. Having seen the elaboration and richness in terms of length and composition in the previous section, the aim here will be to investigate whether a similar elaboration is visible also within the structure of the sentence. We can start by looking at data concerning the presence of paratactic, hypotactic and single-clause sentences in RP:

Table 4-7 – Syntactic links RP

| | RP |
|------------------------------|--------|
| % of paratactic sentences | 5.69% |
| % of hypotactic sentences | 73.17% |
| % of single-clause sentences | 21.14% |

Clearly, hypotactic sentences (i.e., with at least one subordinate clause) are the great majority, followed by single-clause sentences, while paratactic remain at a very low percentage. The prevalence of hypotactic sentences alone does not necessarily mean that the sentence of RP is convoluted, since the degree of

subordination, the distribution of subordinate clauses and their typology influence the complexity of the sentence more than the mere presence of subordinates inside a sentence.²⁰ However, when we compare RP to the previous work PV, we realise that hypotactic sentences have increased greatly, to the detriment of both paratactic and single-clause sentences:

Table 4-8 – Syntactic links: Comparison PV, RP

| | PV diegesis | RP |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------|
| % of paratactic sentences | 16.74% | 5.69% |
| % of hypotactic sentences | 45.61% | 73.17% |
| % of single-clause sentences | 37.66% | 21.14% |

Given the evident differences between PV and RP, we must ask ourselves whether the higher percentage of hypotactic sentences is a sign of higher complexity as well.

The comparison with data from our other points of reference, *Cronache* and *Pasticciaccio*, shows that RP is in between the two works: closer to *Pasticciaccio* regarding paratactic sentences; to *Cronache* regarding the percentage of single-clause; and equidistant to both in the percentage of hypotactic sentences:

Table 4-9 – Syntactic links: Comparison RP, Cronache, Pasticciaccio

| | RP | Cronache | Pasticciaccio |
|------------------------------|--------|----------|---------------|
| % of paratactic sentences | 5.69% | 13.51% | 3.45% |
| % of hypotactic sentences | 73.17% | 56.76% | 89.66% |
| % of single-clause sentences | 21.14% | 29.73% | 6.9% |

In view of the above data, we will investigate especially in the section on degrees of subordination whether a high percentage of hypotactic sentences actually corresponds to a higher complexity.

We can now proceed with the exploration of coordinating links.

²⁰ Mauroni, 'La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei', p. 229.

4.2.1 Syndetic and Asyndetic Coordination

We have observed that paratactic sentences are rare in RP: their scarcity is probably to do with the fact that in RP sentences are in general either single-clause or multiple-clause with a high number of clauses, the latter being a condition that does not favour the presence of just independent clauses coordinated together. We can however say something on the distribution and function of paratactic sentences. They are mainly present in the narrative text, in parts where the narrator simply reports a series of actions, and they are often combined with single-clause sentences. The following example - with two paratactic followed by two single-clause sentences - illustrates well these conditions:

- (7) Caro Emilio, ci siamo poi visti, oggi nel pomeriggio, e l'ho condotto al bar di uno dei grandi alberghi, sempre deserto. Abbiamo bevuto qualcosa, e parlato a lungo. Mi piace molto. È insieme forte e dolce, grave, tenero, delicato. (pp. 321-22)

We can notice that coordination is stressed by the presence of both comma and the conjunction *e*, without it being always necessary. This 'abundant' coordination is repetitively used even in cases where other options could have worked, as in this hypotactic sentence from the narrative text:

- (8) Tu vuoi sapere giustamente del cartellone, e vuoi delle indiscrezioni, ma sono troppo impaziente, e ti scriverò domani una terza lettera, dove troverai spero anche un dettagliato resoconto a proposito della *Medea*. (p. 318)

Here, for example, the last coordinating link could have more precisely been replaced by a conjunction expressing consequence (*dunque*, *per cui*, *quindi*, etc.) since this is the value of the last independent clause ('sono troppo impaziente, per cui ti scriverò domani [...]'). Instead of varying conjunctions and choosing the most accurate ones, Arbasino seems to seek deliberately repetition and imprecision, which have the effect of creating a sense of addition of clauses and of informal nonchalance.

In line with what was seen in the previous section, the very long sentences with an emotional content are particularly affected by this cumulative, repetitive coordination, which conveys spoken informality. This feature is not new in

Arbasino's early works, as it was widely used also in the very long sentences of *Giorgio* and in other stories of PV where he intended to mimic a rather unplanned discourse:

- (9) Mi accorgevo appena che la Callas ormai entrata spiegava il suo canto che non potevo cogliere se non nei soliti termini di 'arcano', di 'misterioso', di 'sortilegio', e minuti e minuti passavano senza che i miei occhi riuscissero a lasciare i suoi al suono di una marcia trionfante non sapevo se esultare o tremare, sfilava l'esercito portatore del vello d'oro e lui mi faceva cenno che non lo fissassi così ma le mani a un certo punto cominciano a cercarsi, anche se uno non ha mai letto *Pompes Funèbres*, che ha la stessa trama della *Norma* (con i tedeschi al posto dei romani, e Riton che potrebbe cantare benissimo 'Un nume, un fato di te più forte / Ci vuole uniti in vita e in morte / Sul rogo stesso che mi divora / Sotterra ancora sarò con te') - o *Querelle de Brest*; e cantavano con Medea ora Giasone e Creonte, io ero consapevole che qualche cosa di decisivo stava accadendomi, e tutta una lunga vicenda cominciava appunto di lì.
(pp. 319-20)

As in the case of *Giorgio*, the sentence is quite rich in clauses, having twenty-four clauses, ten of which independent and fourteen subordinate. Despite this, the architecture of the sentence is linear, as shown by the distribution of asyndeta and conjunctions that link independent clauses (underlined): their presence throughout the sentence shows that it is formed of blocks of one independent clause plus subordinates coordinated one block to the other. We can talk about 'rich linearity' for these sentences. Indeed, despite their length and high number of clauses, they maintain a paratactic structure, which is perfectly in line with the trend of contemporary Italian, only more expanded:

l'italiano contemporaneo preferisc[e] costrutti più lineari composti da due o più principali coordinate che controllano ciascuna una o due subordinate; [...] le subordinate controllate da una stessa proposizione principale tend[on]o a coordinarsi tra loro, facendo così scendere il livello d'incassatura medio al primo o al secondo grado di subordinazione.²¹

Coordinating links not only underline parataxis, but are also key in building the 'running' style that dominates the sentence. The repetition of the conjunction *e* in particular conveys a feel of accumulation and looseness, insofar as it is used to keep the sentence open to the addition of clauses to the point that syntactic links become loose (*paratassi accumulativa*). For example, the use of semicolon

²¹ Tesi, 'Una fase ancora aperta: l'italiano contemporaneo', p. 230.

+ e after the long digression on *Pompes Funèbres* keeps the sentence open to the addition of more independent clauses. These are coordinated to the clause that comes before the digression ('ma le mani a un certo punto cominciano a cercarsi [...]; e cantavano con Medea'); yet, practically, because of the distance between them, the connection appears loose. The aim is to reach, in Martignoni's words, 'la parvenza di un'onesta e sciolta naturalezza', the impression of a sentence that smoothly 'runs' on the page.²²

I have said that this sentence is linear and I have compared it to the ones present in the story *Giorgio*; however, it seems that in RP Arbasino tends to disrupt this linearity much more than in the previous work. By that, I mean the insertion of parenthetical clauses and digressions that break the linear progression of the series of independent clauses: in the example above we have a digression encapsulating a parenthetical clause, which in turn includes a quotation. Arbasino puts obstacles to the flowing rhythm of the sentence and to comprehension, adding in this case an element of reification of literary writing in the pathetic outburst of feeling (see for more details the section on parenthetical clauses below).

In the argumentative parts of the text, sentences have a rather different internal structure. Clusters of independent clauses+subordinates coordinated together are not that widespread. On the contrary, the most frequent structure sees fewer independent clauses on which a higher number of subordinate clauses depend. Coordination happens more often between subordinate clauses - thus keeping the degree of subordination relatively low, given the high number of this type of clauses. Coordinating links are mostly logical-analytic punctuation marks that guide the reader through the acknowledgement of the structure of the sentence. Thus, coordination is the opposite of loose; it is instead quite tight and logical:

(10) Mentre in Francia o in Inghilterra o negli Stati Uniti parecchie persone di cultura, come gli insegnanti, hanno l'abitudine di scrivere, libri e articoli, **la patria letteratura**, proprio a causa delle condizioni specifiche di un paese sovrappopolato e sottosviluppato, **è stata molto nelle mani di tipi** che vivono in piccoli paesi da cui si sono raramente mossi, o legati a

²² Martignoni's quotation refers to FI, but I believe it could very well suit the narrative parts of RP. Martignoni, 'Arbasino: la coerenza della complessità', pp. 12-13.

minuscoli impieghi nelle città importanti; senza aver fatto un corso di studi regolare e severo; senza muoversi e vedere quello che hanno fatto gli altri; *hanté* da ricordi di infanzie provinciali e patetiche, di liti paesane; e affranti da un'ipoteca di regionalismo da cui non sono poi tanti quelli che riescono a scuotersi e a dire 'no, io il bozzetto non lo voglio più fare'. (p. 359)

In this sentence there are sixteen clauses, fifteen of which subordinate and only one main clause - postponed (in bold). It would seem difficult to talk about linearity here; however, there are elements that point in that direction, obviously not regarding independent clauses that are not there, but subordinate clauses; and not characterized by a cumulative parataxis, but by a more logical coordination. If we look at the second part of the sentence (from 'che vivono' to the end), we find a very high number of subordinates (thirteen) and a relatively low degree of subordination (4), which is made possible by the coordination of clusters of subordinate clauses+other subordinate clauses embedded. Coordinating links are mainly asyndeta, in particular semi-colon, that clearly mark the border between one subordinate clause and the other. The structure of this part of the sentence is the following:

la patria letteratura è stata molto nelle mani di tipi

- 1.che vivono in piccoli paesi
 - 2.da cui si sono raramente mossi;
- 1.o legati a minuscoli impieghi nelle città importanti;
 - 2.senza aver fatto un corso di studi regolare e severo;
 - 2.senza muoversi
 - 2.e vedere quello
 - 3.che hanno fatto gli altri;
- 1.*hanté* da ricordi di infanzie provinciali e patetiche, di liti paesane;
- 1.e affranti da un'ipoteca di regionalismo
 - 2.da cui non sono poi tanti quelli
 - 3.che riescono
 - 4.a scuotersi
 - 4.e a dire 'no, io il bozzetto non lo voglio più fare'.

Another element that favours a more linear and simple profile in this part of the sentence is the typology of subordinate clauses: mainly noun and relative clauses, and mostly non-finite. See for example the sequence of relative clauses 'che vivono [...], o legati [...]; *hanté* [...]; e affranti [...]', where the relative pronoun *che* is used just in the first clause, while the others are elliptical, lacking both the pronoun and the auxiliary ('o [che sono] legati' etc.).

In other words, the sentence probably represents one of the peaks of complexity in RP, yet it maintains elements of linearity. It still fits the lines of development of the syntax of contemporary Italian stated above, especially concerning the coordination of subordinates. An impression of higher complexity is probably conveyed also by the more marked written character compared with the one in the narrative text: the main clause is postponed, it is interrupted by parenthetical clauses, discourse markers are not present, there are frequent pairs of adjectives (in the example above: ‘sovrappopolato e sottosviluppato’, ‘regolare e severo’, ‘provinciali e patetiche’), which point to a more planned writing. Moreover, in these argumentative parts sentences like this are found more often one after the other, as we have seen in the previous sections, so that the impression is of a more general complexity. It is significant for example that its degree of subordination is the same as that of some very long sentences in narrative parts, such as the one seen in example 4, but the latter appears more linear. We will explore this aspect in more detail in the next section on subordination.

4.2.2 Subordination

From the analysis of coordination has emerged a tendency to build paratactic sentences or at least with elements of parataxis. Although expanded horizontally, sentences do not seem to be generally complex: the analysis of subordination that will be carried out in this section aims at investigating this aspect further. The analysis is divided in three sub-sections that examine three aspects of subordination, as in the previous case study: the degree of subordination, the distribution of subordinate clauses, and the type of subordinate clauses.

4.2.2.1 Degree of Subordination

The degree of subordination measures how ‘deep’ the sentence is and it is therefore an important criterion to consider when judging the complexity of a sentence. Below is the table showing the maximum and average degree of subordination, and the percentages of the degrees of subordination:

Table 4-10 – Degree of subordination RP

| | RP |
|--|--------|
| Max degree of subordination | 6 |
| Average degree of subordination | 1.97 |
| % of hypotactic sentences with 1 st degree of subordination | 47.19% |
| % with 2 nd degree | 23.6% |
| % with 3 rd degree | 19.1% |
| % with 4 th degree | 6.74% |
| % with 5 th degree | 2.25% |
| % with 6 th degree | 1.12% |

While the maximum of six levels of embedding is a high extreme, the average tells us straight away that in general hypotactic sentences in RP are not complex. The breakdown for each degree of subordination further confirms that the majority of hypotactic sentences in RP have either a first or a second degree of subordination, with low and very low percentages of fourth, fifth and sixth degree of subordination.

Indeed, with an average of 1.97, RP falls without doubts within the average degree of subordination of a standard sentence in contemporary Italian, which we saw is 2. Having ascertained that RP is line with the tendency of subordination of contemporary Italian, we can compare it with PV, to see whether there are any differences:

Table 4-11 – Degree of subordination: Comparison PV, RP

| | PV diegesis | RP |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Max degree of sub | 4 | 6 |
| Average degree of sub | 1.53 | 1.97 |
| % with 1 st degree | 59.81% | 47.19% |
| % with 2 nd degree | 29.91% | 23.6% |
| % with 3 rd degree | 7.48% | 19.1% |
| % with 4 th degree | 2.8% | 6.74% |
| % with 5 th degree | 0 | 2.25% |
| % with 6 th degree | 0 | 1.12% |

RP is indeed slightly more complex than PV, with higher percentages in the third, fourth, fifth and sixth degrees (the last two are not even present in PV) and a higher average degree. To reply to the question we asked at the beginning of section 4.2, whether a higher percentage of hypotactic sentences corresponds to a higher complexity, we can say that this is true for RP. RP, as with respect to PV, has increased both hypotactic sentences and depth of the sentence. This was true also for the story in PV that most resembles RP syntactically, *Giorgio*: it had the highest percentage of hypotactic sentences among the other short stories (78.9%), and also was the most complex, with an average degree of subordination of 2.

Let us now see the comparison with other contemporary works:

Table 4-12 – Degree of sub.: Comparison RP, Cronache, Pasticciaccio

| | RP | Cronache | Pasticciaccio |
|-------------------------------|--------|----------|---------------|
| Max degree of sub | 6 | 3 | 4 |
| Average degree of sub | 1.97 | 1.17 | 1.54 |
| % with 1 st degree | 47.19% | 85.71% | 61.54% |
| % with 2 nd degree | 23.6% | 11.9% | 26.92% |
| % with 3 rd degree | 19.1% | 2.38% | 7.69% |
| % with 4 th degree | 6.74% | 0 | 3.85% |
| % with 5 th degree | 2.25% | 0 | 0 |
| % with 6 th degree | 1.12% | 0 | 0 |

This comparison shows a higher complexity of RP, even with respect to Gadda's *Pasticciaccio*, which we have seen in table 4-9 had a very high percentage of hypotactic sentences (89.7%). This is an example of how high percentages of hypotactic sentences do not necessarily mean higher complexity. It seems a confirmation of the fact that Gadda's texts look complex, but are not such in reality: as the table 4-12 above shows, in *Pasticciaccio* the absolute majority of hypotactic sentences have a first degree of subordination, and the average degree of subordination is 1.5.²³ In comparison with RP, *Pasticciaccio* presents

²³ For Mengaldo, Gadda's 'brachilogie ed ellissi, i grovigli di astratti, [...] gli incisi frequenti, anche a grappolo' are maintained on the level of a 'scarsa subordinazione'. Mengaldo, *Storia della lingua italiana*, p. 153. Also Giacomo Devoto found in Gadda's *Il castello di Udine* that 'le proposizioni subordinate sono scarsamente rappresentate'. Giacomo Devoto, 'Dal Castello di

higher percentages of first and second degree, and lower of third and fourth degree, where it stops. RP therefore presents extremes of depth that *Pasticciaccio* does not have.

The comparison with *Cronache* shows that Pratolini's text opts decisively for simplicity, with the great majority of hypotactic sentences with a first degree of subordination and no sentences going further than the third degree. This comparison confirms that also in terms of depth of the sentence RP surpasses *Cronache*, towards a higher complexity. In summary, data so far tell us that the sentence of RP is generally not deep and is in line with contemporary Italian, although it presents extremes of depth that make it more complex than PV and other contemporary literary works, both Neorealist and expressionist. Let us now analyse some examples from the text.

What surely helps keep the degree of subordination low in RP is the already mentioned linear structure formed by independent clauses coordinated, on which one or two subordinate clauses depend. Most sentences, short or long, are structured in this way in the narrative parts of the text. Here is a fairly straightforward example:

(11) Vieni in città **appena potrai**, dì alla famiglia **che hai da fare qui**, e telefona **appena arrivi**. (p. 323)

The sentence is composed of three independent clauses, four subordinate clauses and a second degree of subordination. In longer sentences, this structure is expanded, with the addition of more independent and subordinate clauses depending on them, embedded but also coordinated one to the other, so that the linearity is maintained. This was the case of example 9, which counted ten independents, fourteen subordinates and a third degree of subordination.

Again in narrative text, in one case the degree of subordination reaches the fifth degree: it is one of those peaks of depth that characterize RP. However, when we look closely at the sentence, we can see that it is enormously expanded,

Udine, in Giacomo Devoto, *Studi di stilistica*, (Florence: Le Monnier, 1950), pp. 57-90 (p. 61). However, in-depth studies on Gadda's syntax are still rare – we can mention for example Emilio Manzotti's 'Note sulla sintassi della *Cognizione*' (1979) – and many aspects still have to be ascertained, as pointed out by Matt, *Gadda*, p. 23.

being composed of forty-six independent and sixty-nine subordinates: it is indeed the longest sentence of the corpus, where the narrator is desperately confessing his love to Roberto (as mentioned in the section on length, example 1). The sentence is again structured in clusters of independent+subordinates, and the fifth degree of subordination is reached just in one of these clusters, whereas in all of the others the degree of embedding is usually two or three, only in one case four. That is to say, the sentence is still linear, and more expanded on the horizontal level than on the vertical one. The following is an extract from the sentence that includes the part with the fifth degree of subordination:

- (12) [...] e quando è stato chiaro che tu non eri più il mio è stato uno schianto una rovina e non riuscirò mai a riavermene, ogni parola ogni musica ogni cosa che mi parla di te **non fa** che affondare il coltello nella piaga, **io** che non ho mai pianto in vita mia lo faccio adesso **ogni volta che rileggo** la tua lettera **a cui non ho risposto** allora per il timore **di alimentare** una grande passione troppo breve **invece del lungo amore in cui io avevo sperato**, e mi accorgo che è oggi troppo tardi [...] (p. 411)

Underlined are independent clauses that show the linear structure, while in bold are the five subordinates embedded one into the other and dependent on the clause 'io lo faccio adesso'. The 'running style' of the sentence achieved through the accumulation of clauses and loose coordination helps to convey an impression of fluidity. Even where subordinate clauses are embedded one into the other, the type (mostly relative clauses) does not interfere with the fluidity of the passage.

The argumentative parts of the text have a higher number of very long sentences with fourth, fifth, and sixth degree of subordination than narrative parts. However, if we had to calculate the average degree of subordination of these parts only, the result would be 2.3, thus just slightly higher than the average sentence in contemporary Italian. Indeed, in the argumentative text hypotactic sentences with a first, second and at most third degree are still the more frequent. The following example counts seven subordinates, one independent but just a second degree of subordination:

- (13) La tristezza dell'errore commesso nell'avventurarsi nei territori ignoti successivi a Sinclair Lewis, e a Dos Passos (autore che per suo conto aveva già compromesso Sartre, facendogli scrivere dei romanzi degli anni '20

alla fine degli anni '30) è stato di trascurare per esempio Fitzgerald puntando sugli scrittori sbagliati: e considerare, ingannando per qualche tempo anche noi poveri bambini, Saroyan e Lee Masters come gli scrittori più importanti del novecento americano, con Caldwell e Steinbeck come due genii appena minori. (p. 360)

The sentence appears more complex than the ones in running style: the predicate of the main clause (underlined) is postponed by a long participial clause and by a parenthetical clause; an interpolated clause fragments a subordinate clause ('e considerare, **ingannando per qualche tempo anche noi poveri bambini**, Saroyan [...]); punctuation is tighter. Yet, this more highly written style is not complex in the end, since the level of embedding is just two thanks to the coordination of subordinate clauses.

Sentences with fourth, fifth and sixth degree are similar in structure to example 13 above: only one or two independents and many subordinates, but with deeper level of embedding. These are surely the peaks of complexity we can find in RP; still, as we have seen in example 10 - which had one independent and fifteen subordinates - these sentences have elements of linearity and simplicity (coordination of subordinates, type of subordinates).

4.2.2.2 Distribution of Subordinate Clauses

The distribution of subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences will help us further complete the outline of subordination in RP:

Table 4-13 – Distribution of subordinates RP

| | RP |
|--|--------|
| Average no. of independent clauses in hypotactic sentences | 3.5 |
| Average no. of subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 5.21 |
| Ratio independent/subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1:1.49 |

What emerges is in general the high average number of subordinate and independent clauses: together they make the average hypotactic sentence more than eight clauses long. Subordinate clauses are higher in number than independent ones; yet the latter are not totally exceeded by the former. The distribution seems to confirm that the sentence in general is not complex.

We can take a look at the following which exemplifies the average sentence:

- (14) Ho avuto qualche nuova avventura, **appena accennata nella lettera precedente**; la prima è stata con un ballerino americano splendido, già con i De Cuevas, **che mi ha attirato perché non capivo e non riuscivo a classificarlo**: fisico americano tipico, pettinatura lo stesso, ma l'abito di taglio molto italiano (infatti l'aveva preso qui). (p. 345)

The sentence has eight clauses, three independents and five subordinates (in bold): the first independent only has one subordinate, while the second independent has four subordinates; two of them are coordinated ('perché non capivo e non riuscivo'), and the final degree of subordination is 3. We can identify a linear structure here: firstly, because subordinate clauses are distributed among independent, although not evenly; secondly because subordinate clauses are coordinated one to the other. The combination of the two keeps the degree of subordination low. RP has many sentences even richer in clauses than this (20% of hypotactic sentences have more than twelve clauses); generally however, both subordinate and independent clauses increase in number proportionally.²⁴ Only 5% of hypotactic sentences present an unbalanced profile of one or two independents and twelve to eighteen subordinates, most of which are in the argumentative parts: this confirms what we were saying above, namely that more complex sentences are peaks of extreme in an average paratactic outline.

Diachronically, data confirm also a slight higher complexity of RP. We can see from the table below that RP has increased decisively the number of subordinate clauses and slightly also that of independent, turning the ratio upside down compared with PV:

Table 4-14 – Distribution of subordinates: Comparison PV, RP

| | PV diegesis | RP |
|---|-------------|--------|
| Average no. of independent clauses in hypotactic sentences | 3.15 | 3.5 |
| Average no. of subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 2.84 | 5.21 |
| Ratio independent/subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1:0.9 | 1:1.49 |

²⁴ Calculation based on data not included in the tables above.

The table shows a higher length and richer composition of hypotactic sentence as well as a higher complexity of RP with respect to PV, as it was suggested by the comparison of degrees of subordination.

Also the comparison with *Cronache* and *Pasticciaccio* shows a similar trend as the one seen above:

Table 4-15 – Distribution of sub.: Comparison RP, Cronache, Pasticciaccio

| | RP | Cronache | Pasticciaccio |
|--|--------|----------|---------------|
| Average no. of independent clauses in hypotactic sentences | 3.5 | 1.71 | 2.42 |
| Average no. of subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 5.21 | 1.52 | 2.69 |
| Ratio independent/subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1:1.49 | 1:0.89 | 1:1.11 |

There is a clear move away from the Neorealist work but also a richer composition and higher ratio than the expressionist work.

4.2.2.3 Types of Subordinate Clauses

The final part of this investigation looks at the types of subordinate clauses used in RP:

Table 4-16 – Types of subordinates RP

| | RP |
|---|--------|
| Noun clauses (direct + indirect object) | 34.12% |
| Noun clauses (subject) | 4.48% |
| Interrogative | 3.41% |
| RELATIVE CLAUSES | |
| Restrictive Relative | 22.6% |
| Non-Restrictive Relative | 6.18% |
| ADVERBIAL CLAUSES | |
| Temporal | 5.76% |
| Final | 5.12% |
| Causal | 4.05% |
| Mode | 2.77% |
| Hypothetical | 3.84% |

| | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Comparative | 1.28% |
| Concessive | 1.71% |
| Consecutive | 1.07% |
| Exclusion | 1.28% |
| 'Coordinated' gerund | 1.28% |
| Limit | 0.43% |
| Adversative | 0.64% |

In line with contemporary narrative, noun, interrogative and relative clauses form together the great majority of subordinate clauses, 70.8%. The remaining 29.2% is represented by adverbial clauses, divided into a wide variety: final, causal and temporal clauses have percentages that range between 4.05% and 5.8%. Although with decreasing percentages, some other less common types of subordinate clauses are present, such as hypothetical, mode, concessive, comparative, etc. Yet, in comparison with PV diegesis (see table 3-16 in case study 1), we should underline that in RP the overall percentage of noun and relative clauses together have increased, while the overall percentage of adverbial clauses has diminished. This datum is interesting especially if crossed with those of the average number of subordinates per sentence and degree of subordination discussed in the previous sections. RP has a higher average number of subordinates and degree of subordination than PV, but also a higher percentage of noun and relative clauses, therefore of the most common types of subordinates. In a way, we could say that the slight higher complexity and extension of hypotactic sentences in RP is compensated by using more noun and relative subordinates.

For instance, despite the high number of subordinates (fourteen), in the following example linearity and simplicity are maintained thanks to the coordination of noun clauses:

- (15) lo sento il bisogno di sapere - prima cosa - **chi sono, qual è il loro aspetto, il carattere, se sono o no creature di carne e sangue, come vivono, quanto guadagnano**, perché mi possano interessare devo saperli conoscere, distinguere, prevedere con una certa approssimazione come si comporterebbero in ogni circostanza della vita; se non li conosco mi infastidiscono solo... (p. 358)

Borrowing Tesi's words, subordination here is limited to 'un semplice accostamento di proposizioni argomentali coordinate finalizzato a riprodurre sulla pagina la linearità sintattica del parlato in contesti reali'.²⁵

Linearity in particular is fostered with non-finite subordinate clauses. We can see it in the example above ('saperli conoscere, distinguere, prevedere'), as well as in example 10 studied in the section on coordination. This example has a very high number of subordinates and a fourth degree of subordination, yet the degree of subordination is kept low and linearity fostered by a series of participial relative clauses, infinitive noun clauses and infinitive clauses of exclusion coordinated. Here again is the part of the example affected by subordination:

(16) la patria letteratura, proprio a causa delle condizioni specifiche di un paese sovrappopolato e sottosviluppato, è stata molto nelle mani di tipi **che vivono** in piccoli paesi da cui si sono raramente mossi, **o legati** a minuscoli impieghi nelle città importanti; **senza aver fatto** un corso di studi regolare e severo; **senza muoversi e vedere** quello che hanno fatto gli altri; *hanté* da ricordi di infanzie provinciali e patetiche, di liti paesane; **e affranti** da un'ipoteca di regionalismo da cui non sono poi tanti quelli che riescono **a scuotersi e a dire** 'no, io il bozzetto non lo voglio più fare'. (p. 359)

In RP the incidence of subordinates with a non-finite form of the verb is remarkable, especially for some types: 50.6% of its noun clauses (direct + indirect object) are infinitive, 33.3% of its temporal clauses are participial or gerundive and 95.8% of its final clauses are infinitive.²⁶ Such a high presence of infinitive final clauses was a feature of PV as well, where I argued they were used to avoid an impression of literariness, mainly because of the elevated register of most of the conjunctions that would otherwise introduce this type of subordinates (*affinché, onde*, etc.). We can say that the same happens in RP and, indeed, the times when final clauses are finite they are introduced by conjunction *perché*, the more common among final conjunctions.²⁷

²⁵ Riccardo Tesi, 'Pluralità di stili e sintassi del periodo nelle *Operette morali* di Giacomo Leopardi', in Riccardo Tesi, *Un'immensa molteplicità di lingue e stili: studi sulla fine dell'italiano letterario della tradizione* (Florence: Cesati, 2009), pp. 15-83 (p. 28).

²⁶ Calculation based on corpus data not included in the tables above.

²⁷ Bertuccelli Papi, 'Finali', p. 822.

Another way to foster linearity is by omitting the subordinating conjunction. We can take a look at the following example, which is part of a very long, ‘emotional’ sentence already quoted in the section on composition (example 4):

(17) mi sentivo altro che separato da ‘tutto il resto dell’uditorio’, dalla Scala, dal mondo, e le luci si riaccendessero, si potevano udir meraviglie, cambiare le scene, finire l’opera, gli applausi clamorosi non mi toccavano: ‘avulso dal contesto’, come niente [...] (p. 321)

The subordinate clauses underlined are concessive clauses: although they have a finite form of the verb, they lack the conjunction introducing them (sebbene > \emptyset). Thus, subordination is hidden and the sentence appears more fluent and linear. Moreover, we can observe an inconsistency in the use of the tense (subjunctive imperfect, then indicative imperfect and finally infinitive without the auxiliary), which gives the impression of a somewhat uncontrolled writing, mostly exposed to the emotional state of mind of the narrator and closer to the spoken pole of the language.

Omission of subordinating conjunctions happens also in argumentative text, where they are often replaced by a colon: in this way, the hypotactic construction is transformed into a paratactic one, favouring simplicity and clarity in the elaborate architecture of the sentence that characterizes these parts of the text:²⁸

(18) [...] bisogna certo considerare la giustificazione che pochissimi italiani negli anni '30 e nei primi '40 sapevano leggere l'inglese e capire l'americano, e i testi erano molto difficili da procurare, le traduzioni nella nostra lingua molto spesso vietate dai fascisti, quelle francesi disponibili irregolarmente, e quasi nessuno era riuscito a andare all'estero, anche per la particolare struttura della nostra società e del nostro sistema educativo: la cultura nel nostro paese difficilmente si fa nelle classi elevate che non sono molto colte, né nell'ambiente degli studi superiori, che non conta molto. (p. 359)

The colon avoids in this case a causal clause: ‘poiché/dato che la cultura del nostro paese [...]’.

On the other hand, as we have observed in the previous sections, linearity is in some cases interrupted by the insertion of parenthetical clauses. In this respect,

²⁸ Mortara Garavelli, *Prontuario di punteggiatura*, p. 102.

the percentage of non-restrictive relative clauses - which often take a parenthetical position - is interesting: 6.18%, whereas for example in PV it was 1.94%. The increment probably mirrors Arbasino's marked interest in this novel to disrupt linearity by inserting parenthetical clauses (underlined):

(19) Nella fila che non finiva mai di salire le scale vedevi i soliti visi noti, e le impeccabili grisaglie degli abituati che incontri alle prime alle repliche e alle ultime, e tanto agli spettacoli per i lavoratori come alle matinée fuori abbonamento. (p. 318)

(20) Per questo appena finito l'atto l'ho seguito dove era corso a accendersi una sigaretta per chiedergli come prima cosa 'chi sei?', e senza aspettare un attimo ha detto il suo nome (che è Roberto) aggiungendo subito 'e ho un appartamento libero tutti i pomeriggi in via Proust numero 25' dandomi anche il telefono. (p. 320)

In example 19 the non-restrictive relative (underlined) is not even enclosed between comma, as it should normally be, enhancing the flowing of narration (also the list that follows does not present commas: 'alle prime alle repliche e alle ultime').²⁹ In example 20 instead the parenthetical position of the relative 'che è Roberto' is underlined by the use of parentheses. However, in the passage there are other subordinates in parenthetical position without commas: a temporal participial ('appena finito l'atto') and an infinitive of exclusion ('senza aspettare un attimo'). There seems to be a tension here, between the tendency to disrupt linearity and the effort not to interrupt the flow. In the argumentative text also there are non-restrictive relatives in parenthetical position, this time though appropriately signalled by punctuation marks:

(21) Finiva la guerra; e il cinema, che anche qui è arrivato a certi risultati prima della letteratura, scopriva questa sorprendente tecnica di rivelare alcune realtà nazionali non-ufficiali [...] (p. 361)

In terms of types of subordinating conjunctions, RP seems to be using the most common for each type of subordinate clauses, as it was the case in PV, possibly with a little wider selection. For temporal clauses, we find *quando*, *mentre*, *finché*; for causal clauses, *perché*, and one instance of *dato che*; for concessive clauses, *anche se* and *nonostante* (two occurrences each); for hypothetical

²⁹ Guglielmo Cinque, 'La frase relativa', GGIC, I, 443-506 (p. 444).

clauses, *se* is the most common, while *purché* appears only once. In one case, there is *come mai* instead of *perché* in an interrogative clause: for Sabatini this conjunction is more and more widespread in *lingua media*.³⁰ The choice of an anti-literary, colloquial language also emerges from these details. However, Arbasino seems to prefer to remain on the side of grammatical correctness and tends not to use a typical subordinating conjunction of spoken language, *che polivalente*. It is actually interesting to see how in some situations he chooses more informal subordinating links, yet he omits *che* probably in order not to sound incorrect:

(22) Però a me viene il dubbio che a te interessi maggiormente sentirmi parlare di Roberto. E che tu ti senta defraudato come il pubblico che entra pagando al cinema per vedersi 'quel' film e gli rifilano invece i documentari in lode al governo. (p. 345)

In this example, the second of the two relative clauses underlined, 'e gli rifilano', according to grammar should be introduced by the relative pronoun *a cui*, since the relative pronoun refers to *il pubblico*, which represent the indirect object of the verb *rifilare*: 'il pubblico, che entra [...] e a cui rifilano'. However, here the presence of the indirect object pronoun *gli* (= *al pubblico*) implies that the relative clause is introduced, like the first one, by *che*, according to a construction typical of colloquial style which sees the use of conjunction *che* plus clitic pronoun instead of a prepositional relative pronoun (*a cui* > *che gli*). Arbasino, though, 'hides' part of the colloquial style effect by omitting *che* and leaving just the indirect object pronoun, in this way not risking sounding too informal but still conserving the impression of spontaneity.³¹

It is significant that the other two cases of *che polivalente* are both 'il giorno che', where *in cui* > *che*, which is already a crystallized expression, considered as belonging to standard Italian.³² Similarly, RP does not provide many examples of segmentation of the clause, such as cleft sentences: only one in the corpus analysed ('ed è proprio su questo che essi logicamente contano'). At the level of the syntax of the clause, we do not find many dislocations either: : 'lo so che mi ami', 'Parigi non la prende in esame', 'i sordi a questa caratteristica del tempo

³⁰ Sabatini, 'L'italiano dell'uso medio', p. 166.

³¹ Cinque, 'La frase relativa', pp. 446 and 497-99.

³² Berruto, *Sociolinguistica dell'italiano contemporaneo*, pp. 68-9.

[...] li vediamo più lontani', 'no io il bozzetto non lo voglio più fare', 'questa vita la sento'. In general, we should therefore underline the overall grammatical correctness of RP, which does not reproduce some of the most informal traits of spoken Italian, very widely present instead in Neorealist works.³³

Summarizing what we have seen in this section on the internal structure of the sentence, we can say that parataxis and linearity generally prevail, also for long and elaborate sentences, which appear horizontally extended but not vertically deep: a condition that I have labelled as 'rich linearity'. In the narrative text, we witness parataxis performed through the coordination of independent clauses, on which one or more subordinate clauses can depend. Coordinating links contribute to creating an effect of accumulation and spoken informality that mimics the emotional flow of telling of the narrator; yet in some cases linearity is interrupted by parenthetical clauses.

In the argumentative text the structure of the sentence differs in that often we find one or two independent clauses on which a higher number of subordinate clauses depend. These subordinates are however usually coordinated one with the other, thus keeping the degree of subordination low; coordinating links are punctuation marks with a more logical-syntactic function that convey a written flavour and an impression of complexity, which is however not real. Only in a small percentage of sentences the degree of subordination reaches deep levels of embedding, but even in these sentences it is possible to find elements of linearity.

These conclusions are supported by the comparisons made along the way. Although the occasional deep level of embedding and the more frequent use of a third degree of subordination implies an increase in complexity in comparison with the previous work, PV, and other contemporary works, in particular Pratolini's Neorealist novel, the depth of the sentence of RP remains within the range of contemporary Italian. Again, what breaks with the standard is the

³³ Testa, *Lo stile semplice*, pp. 224-31.

horizontal expansion of the sentence, which definitely links RP to experimental texts.

So far we have explored in detail the syntax of the sentence: we have drawn conclusions about the collocation of the work from a linguistic and stylistic point of view. I would like in the next sections to focus my attention more closely on some syntactic devices that can complement and clarify what is said in the previous sections.

4.3 Parenthetical Clauses

Several times while analysing the syntax of the sentence of RP I have remarked on the disruptive presence of parenthetical clauses: first of all, as a factor of interruption of the sentence's linear progression; secondly as a factor of further expansion of sentences with already a high number of words. This invasive presence did not happen in PV, and it is my intention to further investigate the expressive outcomes of parentheticals in RP, both from a syntactic and stylistic standpoint.

4.3.1 Disruption and Excess

Let us have a closer look at how disruption of linearity and expansion of the sentence are performed. The impression of disruption comes above all because parenthetical clauses are often inserted in the middle of the sentence or of the clause, right after the noun or phrase they refer to; moreover, they are not introduced by coordinating or subordinating links, that is, they are not coordinated or subordinated to the host sentence, which increases their syntactic independence. In other words, they appear as the narrator's further specifications, comments or digressions added to what he is saying but not integrated syntactically in it, hence the obstacles to comprehension that the reader experiences:

- (23) Giusto di ispirazione polemica (**reazione immediata a quella già frusta maniera**) era la scelta del tema, l'aver preso la *Princesse de Clèves* e *Le Bal du Comte d'Orgel* (**soprattutto quest'ultimo io tenevo d'occhio**) a modello per quella ben poco struggente storia d'amore (**personaggi fatui, svogliati, tutti poco simpatici... situazioni false o paradossali...**). (p. 355)

This is quite an extreme example of the fragmentation imposed by parentheticals: in just one sentence there are three of them. The first one breaks the main clause in two parts and refers to the phrase ‘di ispirazione polemica’, adding a comment on it. The second one again breaks the clause with a comment on the part that precedes (the title *Le Bal du Comte d’Orgel*). The last one comes at the end of the sentence and is more of explicative nature, referring to the phrase ‘per quella ben poco struggente storia d’amore’. The parentheticals do not appear complex or pose problems to comprehension *per se*: each of them actually helps avoid subordination, which is the type of link they would have if they were integrated in the clause (e.g.: ‘Poiché avevo provato una reazione immediata a quella già frusta maniera la scelta del tema era stata giusto di ispirazione polemica’, etc.). It is more the frequency and length of the interruption that causes the feeling of fragmentation. In this sense they fit well in the general tendency of the syntax of RP to expand the sentence horizontally but not vertically, of adding words and clauses but not depth to the sentence that emerged in the previous sections. At most, parentheticals make linearity elaborated, rich, possibly difficult to follow, but are not a factor of complexity, meaning depth of the sentence. In view of the absence of these long and elaborate parentheticals in PV, they are also a factor that contributes to the general longer extension of the sentence in RP when compared to PV.

Other examples of significant disruption happen when the main clause of a sentence is delayed or broken by a parenthetical clause: we have seen this in example 10 (‘la patria letteratura, **proprio a causa delle condizioni specifiche di un paese sovrappopolato e sottosviluppato**, è stata molto nelle mani di tipi’) and in the following passage, already reported elsewhere:

(24) La tristezza dell’errore commesso nell’avventurarsi nei territori ignoti successivi a Sinclair Lewis, e a Dos Passos (**autore che per suo conto aveva già compromesso Sartre, facendogli scrivere dei romanzi degli anni ’20 alla fine degli anni ’30**) è stato [...] (p. 360)

We should add that both example 10 and the one above occur in sentences which are already quite elaborate in terms of length and composition. We can notice that, while in example 10 the parenthetical is causal and appears objective, in example 24 it is a more personal comment of the narrator, almost a digression that potentially could proliferate in another direction. Many

parentheticals actually have this function of opening another ‘level’: of topics, or as we will see in the next section, of narration, of points of view. They do exactly the same as the footnotes: they represent a counter-text, or text within the text, which signal the impossibility of a conclusion and completion of the work. Let us examine another example:

(25) In seguito, parecchi anni dopo, maturando abbastanza e attraverso la conoscenza di una certa linea di classici minori - **risalendo, magari rozzamente attraverso Waugh, che, intendiamoci è un bravo scrittore, a Firbank, a Saki, a Zuleika Dobson, fino ai saggi di Connolly e della Sitwell, imparando l’importanza delle figure di Forster e di Auden** - si arriverà a rendersi conto che non esistono solo autori (**notevolissimi, sperimentali, ma di cui ci si era parlato ‘al più alto livello’ come se non ci fosse altro che potesse contare**), come Joyce, D. H. Lawrence e la Woolf; ma a un certo punto ci importa forse di più di gente come Henry Green o la Compton-Burnett, per quel dono dell’ironia che permette a loro di ravvisare, e a noi di riconoscere nella loro opera, il connotato più vero del nostro tempo, che è la compenetrazione di tragedia e di farsa, indissolubili come i due aspetti di una medesima realtà, e che è stato inteso bene dai più alti fra gli autori che ci dicono qualche cosa, dai grandi musicisti come Stravinski e Prokofiev, dallo stesso Mann, dallo stesso Gadda. (p. 358)

This is one of the peaks of complexity we were talking about in the exploration of the syntax of the sentence: long, rich in clauses, two independents and sixteen subordinates, a sixth degree of subordination, main clause postponed. Parenthetical clauses are excessive too, long and elaborate; they both have coordinated or subordinated clauses within them and they are syntactically linked to the host sentence. The first parenthetical appears before the main clause further delaying it. It is composed of four clauses, three of which interpolated one into the other:

1. ‘risalendo’: gerundive coordinated to the previous two clauses in the host sentence ‘maturando abbastanza e attraverso la conoscenza’
2. ‘che è un bravo scrittore’: non-restrictive relative subordinated to the gerundive;
3. ‘intendiamoci’, an independent parenthetical within the non-restrictive relative;
4. ‘imparando’: gerundive coordinated to ‘risalendo’.

Furthermore, this parenthetical contains a list of (foreign) names. The second parenthetical is composed of an apposition, a relative clause dependant on ‘autori’ in the host sentence, and two subordinates embedded one into the

other ‘come se non ci fosse altro che potesse contare’ and dependent on the preceding relative clause. This second parenthetical seems less complex but it actually reaches the fifth degree of subordination. We could therefore say that in this case parentheticals contribute to the general syntactic complexity of the sentence. Moreover, the function of the first one is of opening a digression on ‘classici minori’, so not only this parenthetical represents an ‘obstacle’ in syntactic terms, but it also opens the sentence to thematic deviations.

4.3.2 Points of View and Reification

Every parenthetical embodies a different point of view from the one upheld in the host sentence.³⁴ However, in RP there are some that more clearly underline this feature, as the following:

(26) lo cerco di fargli notare che questo lo mette in una situazione falsa, per lo meno imbarazzante (**ma non lo avverte**), dico che nessuno fa niente per niente (**lui invece sostiene di sì**), dovrà ricambiare, o per lo meno ringraziare, scrivere, essere cortese, ed è proprio su questo che essi logicamente contano, in tal modo non riuscirà a liberarsene più... (p. 353)

Here the narrator is explaining his position towards his lover’s attitude to give and receive presents continuously. His argument is developed in the host sentence, while parenthetical clauses contain Roberto’s replies, retold by the narrator. Basically, they embody Roberto’s point of view on the issue. We could also read this interchange of points of view between host sentence and parenthetical clause as an alternative to a dialogue, a way to avoid the use of a mimetic level in the novel.

The following example is interesting since the parenthetical introduces both a second point of view and an element of metanarrative reflection:

(27) È bensì vero che sto impazzendo per l’Adalgisa (**che mi fa morire**) e per le *Novelle dal Ducato in Fiamme*, e questo fatto mi sospingerebbe a sfrenate, inaudite licenze; ma dopo tutto gli voglio bene sì (**siamo ai primi di aprile; a quell’epoca calcolavamo di aver fatto l’amore molto più di cento volte insieme**). (p. 345)

³⁴ Tucci, ‘Frase parentetiche’.

Focusing on the second parenthetical, we can notice that it refers to the event of the host sentence in the past and with a time expression ('a quell'epoca') which indicates that the two are on different spatial-temporal level: the parenthetical is a comment made a posteriori, after the events narrated in the host sentence happened. It is always the narrator's voice, but a different point of view and another level of narration. While the host sentence represents level zero, the narrator's telling of the affair with Roberto, the parenthetical represents level one, where the narrator tells about his project of writing a novel on his affair with Roberto, after this has ended. The parenthetical inserts therefore an element of *mise en abyme*, a role already exemplified by the footnotes outside narration, but that in this case is brought within narration, with an effect of disorientation and estrangement in the reader.

We can observe this feature of bringing in within narration elements that in the novel are normally left in the footnotes also in the following example:

(28) [...] sfilava l'esercito portatore del vello d'oro e lui mi faceva cenno che non lo fissassi così ma le mani a un certo punto cominciano a cercarsi, anche se uno non ha mai letto *Pompes Funèbres*, che ha la stessa trama della *Norma* (con i tedeschi al posto dei romani, e Riton che potrebbe cantare benissimo 'Un nume, un fato di te più forte / Ci vuole uniti in vita e in morte / Sul rogo stesso che mi divora / Sotterra ancora sarò con te') - o *Querelle de Brest* [...] (pp. 319-320)

We have already had the chance to comment upon the length and elaboration of the parenthetical (see example 9); what is interesting here is the insertion of a quotation. Quotations are normally placed in the footnotes, and represent a different voice, that of the author of the work quoted: possibly a fourth level of narration, that of other authors, of Literature, after the three mentioned in the introduction to this case study. The subtle game wants to point at the fact that literary works are made of other literary works, and literature is the object of literature: the reification of literature that started in PV by introducing quotations and allusions in the titles and in the text is here made more evident by their use in specific 'containers' (parentheticals and footnotes), separated from the main text. In RP the idea of literature as *divertissement* starts to take more strength and Arbasino intends to show it through more and more intellectual games. As we will see, this idea will reach its acme in the following novel FI.

In the light of this, it is easy to find further elements of reification of literature: the frequent use of parentheticals itself is probably another homage to Gadda, who frequently used parentheticals (even clusters of parentheticals) in his works to generate deviations from the level of narration they are inserted and syntactic discontinuity.³⁵ To further confirm the line of experimental writers, also Dossi used parentheticals to fragment, interrupt, and deviate from a linear progression of the sentence.³⁶

4.3.3 Linearity and Interactivity

Up to now we have talked about parentheticals that interrupt the linear flow of the host sentence and create obstacles to comprehension with their length and their excessive presence. There are on the other hand also parentheticals that more clearly favour linearity, as in the following example:

(29) Tu vuoi sapere giustamente del cartellone, e vuoi delle indiscrezioni, ma sono troppo impaziente, e ti scriverò domani una terza lettera, dove troverai **spero** anche un dettagliato resoconto a proposito della *Medea*. (p. 318)

The parenthetical clause is limited to a verb, 'spero', which has the function of attributing a degree of uncertainty to the preceding element, the verb 'troverai'.³⁷ We can observe that it is not preceded and followed by any punctuation, as if any sort of graphic obstacle - even those that would allow the correct acknowledgement of the parenthetical - had been removed to add a sense of rapidity, of smoothness and a spoken flavour to the passage. Indeed, in this way writing resembles more 'written as if it was spoken': without relying on punctuation to mark the pause, but on intonation, as spoken language does. Moreover, linearity is enhanced on a syntactic level since the verb put in parenthetical position allows the avoidance of subordination. The passage 'dove

³⁵ Devoto, 'Dal Castello di Udine', pp. 59-60; Emilio Manzotti, 'Note sulla sintassi della *Cognizione*', in *Archivio Manzotti*, ed. by Riccardo Stracuzzi, *Edinburgh Journal of Gadda Studies Supplement*, 5 (2007), § 1.1, <<http://www.gadda.ed.ac.uk/Pages/journal/supp5archivm/emessays/manzottisintassiccdd.php>>, accessed 11 February 2015 (firstly published in *In ricordo di Cesare Angelini: studi di letteratura e filologia*, ed. by Franco Alessio e Angelo Stella (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1979), pp. 343-74).

³⁶ See, on the use of parentheticals in Dossi's *L'altrieri*, Caputo, *Sintassi e dialogo nella narrativa di Carlo Dossi*, pp. 29-33. Parentheticals are also frequent in the poems of the New Avant-Gardist writer Sanguineti: Coletti, *Storia dell'italiano letterario*, p. 452.

³⁷ Cignetti, 'La [pro]posizione parentetica', pp. 98-9.

troverai spero’ could be re-structured with ‘spero’ as main clause and ‘troverai’ as noun clause subordinate to ‘spero’: ‘dove spero che troverai’. In this case a hierarchical relation between the two clauses would be introduced, where there was none before.³⁸

The difference is clear in the example below:

- (30) Ma ti prego di non fare imprudenze. Lo so che mi ami, e sono ben lieto di sentirmelo dire, ma **ti prego**, non scrivermi più di una volta al giorno; e non lasciarti andare al telefono: stamattina mi hai messo in grande imbarazzo. (p.323)

In the first sentence the verb ‘ti prego’ is syntactically integrated in the sentence: it is the main clause on which a non-finite noun clause (‘di non fare imprudenze’) depends. In the second sentence, the same verb is instead in parenthetical position, avoiding the subordinating link: ‘ma ti prego di non scrivermi’ > ‘ma ti prego, non scrivermi’. While in the previous example the function was of commenting, here the parenthetical is more an exclamation, an appeal to the addressee of the letter. Its function is that of stressing the interactivity of the discourse, although, in the case of an epistolary, the interaction is delayed in time and space. Actually, their use in RP boosts the impression of a discourse where both interlocutors are present: a spoken discourse. Not by chance, we find these types of discourse markers in parenthetical position especially in the narrative text.³⁹

- (31) pensa che ci sedevamo sui divanini a parlare, e non riesco a ricordare che cosa abbiamo detto, ma, **ti assicuro**, neanche una parola, comunque abbiamo scoperto di essere compagni della stessa università, dove non c’eravamo mai visti, non ci viene mai, è matricola, e io non mi sono sentito più solo, anzi, pensavo ‘io non mi sentirò mai più solo, mai più’ era bella, **sai**, la sua voce all’orecchio, calda, profonda, come quella dell’attore Tedeschi, pensavo ‘è lui il mio, sarà sempre lui’, poi sai bene che alla fine sono dovuto correr via subito, e così ci siamo dati un appuntamento per il giorno dopo. (p. 321)

This example, already seen in the sections on the syntax of the sentence, is characterized by cumulative parataxis to mimic an emotional spoken confession.

³⁸ Ida Tucci, ‘Frase incidentali’, in *Enciclopedia dell’italiano* (2010), <[³⁹ Carla Bazzanella, ‘Segnali discorsivi’, GGIC, III, pp. 223-57 \(pp. 236-39\).](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/frasi-incidentali_(Enciclopedia-dell'Italiano)/>, accessed 15 May 2016.</p>
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Discourse markers such as ‘ti assicuro’ and ‘sai’ are used respectively to reassure the interlocutor about the content of the sentence and to get his attention, and they further contribute to the impression of a spoken interaction.⁴⁰ The parenthetical position is essential for these verbs to perform the function of discourse markers: when in the example the verb ‘sai’ is syntactically integrated in the sentence (‘sai bene che alla fine sono dovuto correr via’), it loses its interactive dimension.

In summary, we have seen that parenthetical clauses can be a factor of disruption and excess but also of linearity and rapidity; they can express another point of view and be the tools through which the literary game is unveiled, but also recreate the interactivity of spoken discourses and be an alternative to dialogues. They represent a novelty in comparison with PV, especially as far as long and fragmenting parentheticals are concerned, with metanarrative connotation: they point to the tendency to build more extended and elaborate sentences in this second work, but they also embody the Arbasinian growing poetics of the work of art as a self-reflecting structure made of quotations.

4.4 Nominal Style

As in the case of PV, I will investigate in a dedicated section the status of a syntactic and stylistic feature that will prove fundamental in FI and in general for the construction of Arbasino’s style: nominal style. In PV, we saw that alongside some traditional literary uses of nominal style some new ones started to emerge, more functional to a recreation of spoken language, like predicative nominal clauses, or typical of Arbasino’s style, lists. We will see whether in RP some new and more authorial uses appear or whether the use of nominal style remains on the traditional side. First of all, we can look at the percentages of nominal and mixed sentences in RP, in comparison with PV:

⁴⁰ Discourse markers are listed among the features that characterize spoken language by Berretta and Voghera. Berretta, ‘Il parlato italiano contemporaneo’, pp. 247-48; Miriam Voghera, ‘Lingua parlata’, in *Enciclopedia dell’italiano* (2010), <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lingua-parlata_\(Enciclopedia-dell'Italiano\)/>](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lingua-parlata_(Enciclopedia-dell'Italiano)/>), accessed 13 May 2016.

Table 4-17 – Nominal style: Comparison PV, RP

| | PV diegesis | RP |
|---|-------------|--------|
| Predicative nominal Sentences as % of total number of sentences | 18.29% | 2.42% |
| Mixed sentences as % of total number of sentences | 8.13% | 13.71% |
| Verbal sentences as % of total number of sentences | 73.58% | 83.87% |

Data point to a general reduction in the use of nominal style from PV to RP: while the percentage of mixed sentences has increased, that of predicative nominal sentences has strongly reduced from 18.3% in PV to a low 2.4% in RP. One of the reasons for such a drop can be the fact that predicative nominal sentences in PV were especially present in those short stories written in a reportage style, made of short, single-clause, nominal sentences. Whereas RP, as we have seen, prefers longer measures and more elaborate compositions, which at most are composed of parts in nominal style (those called ‘mixed sentences’) but are not entirely nominal. Also the short story *Giorgio*, the one that syntactically resembles RP more, had one of the highest percentages of mixed sentences and one of the lowest of predicative nominal sentences compared to other stories.

Let us take a look at some of the most common realizations of nominal style in RP.

4.4.1 Rhythm

The first type of nominal construction consists in isolating at the end of the sentence a nominal element formally belonging to it:

- (32) Caratteristico del suo animo femminile è che per raffigurare il suo ideale in pieno dovrei essere una specie di eroe da film in costume, corteggiarlo, dominarlo, difenderlo dai nemici. **Probabilmente con la spada in pugno, come Errol Flynn.** (p. 350)

Here it is a prepositional phrase, followed by a comparative, that is detached from the sentence it belongs to by full stops. Thus, the nominal element - which is usually quite short, or in any case shorter than the sentence - is fragmented and highlighted, creating an alternation of longer and shorter measures and

consequently contrasting rhythms. A variant to the fragmentation and isolation of part of the sentence is the reproduction at the end of it of a nominal element already contained in the sentence, in order to give prominence to the element:

- (33) Un'altra particolarità che mi disorienta non è ormai più l'uso praticato della passività amorosa - ma il parlarne che ne fa. **Un gran parlarne.**
(p. 351)

Here the element focalized and highlighted is the nominalization 'parlarne', accompanied by the adjective 'gran'. The noun already appeared in the sentence, but its repetition and isolation through full stops at the end impose a surplus of attention on its meaning and its possible implications.

This isolation of nominal elements at the end of the sentence is frequent in narrative prose and therefore its use in RP is not particularly original;⁴¹ yet it fits in the general tendency of the narrative parts of RP to alternate contrasting lengths and create conflicting rhythms that we have observed above, in the sections on length and composition.

4.4.2 Stereotypes

In some cases, nominal constructions have the function of highlighting stereotypical expressions, worn-out speech forms that Arbasino 'innocently' introduces in the discourse to point at the intrinsic repetitive nature of language and of literature. Let us take a look at the following example:

- (34) Dovresti sinceramente credere che io mi sentivo molto profondamente commosso e turbato, ero appena capace di riflettere **che 'gioia-abisso-disperazione-incanto'**; tutto d'ora in avanti dipenderebbe da lui, da chi lui fosse, dal suo carattere, intenzioni, ecc. (p. 320)

The sentence refers to the narrator's falling in love with Roberto, during the representation of *Medea* at *La Scala* with Maria Callas in the title role. The narrator is explaining the state of internal turmoil he felt at the sight of Roberto. To express his inability to think rationally and articulate a sentence, the predicative nominal clause depending on 'ero appena capace di riflettere' is

⁴¹ 'La formula di isolare un elemento per dare risalto semantico o enfasi emotiva è frequente e consolidata nella prosa letteraria', Mauroni, 'Tre esempi di stile nominale', p. 259, fn 22. See also Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', p. 698.

a row of nouns linked together by hyphens, deprived of any other linguistic element that could help to fit these words into a syntactic structure and make sense of them: ‘che “gioia-abisso-disperazione-incanto”’. The long word stands out for its originality, as it is probably an authorial creation; technically it is a nominalization, that is, the transformation of an element - in this case four nouns - into one single noun.⁴² Its function, however, is not just pointing at the narrator’s loss of rationality and thus increasing the pathos of the passage; it is also parodying this moment of pathetic emotion. Indeed the narrator, by using this nominalization to describe his emotion, is doing nothing more than repeating various commonplaces very seemingly referred to Maria Callas in the *articoli di colore* of the time. The inverted commas signal exactly the nature of quotation of this nominal formation. By making this platitude recognizable, Arbasino is subtly alluding to the fact that the entire passage of the encounter between the narrator and Roberto is made of stereotyped language, and at the same time that he knows it and ironically detaches himself from it. In fact, during the development of the scene at *La Scala*, at least two footnotes and various more or less hidden quotations in the text warn us that *articoli di colore* on one hand and sentimental or erotic serial novels on the other inform the passage with their language.⁴³ Moreover, the stereotypical character of the nouns referred to the soprano is further confirmed by their re-use in an essay written by Arbasino in 1997 on Maria Callas.⁴⁴ As we will see in the next case study, nominalizations often identify stereotypes in FI.

We can examine another example from the same passage at the opera:

(35) Ma io mi sentivo già in pieno romanzo, guarda qui come può ridursi uno che pure aspira a fare il raziocinante, e lo guardavo sognando, ma

⁴² Giuliana Fiorentino, ‘Nominalizzazioni’, in *Enciclopedia dell’italiano* (2011), <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/nominalizzazioni_\(Enciclopedia_dell'Italiano\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/nominalizzazioni_(Enciclopedia_dell'Italiano)/)>, accessed 17 May 2016.

⁴³ See RP, footnote 3, p. 318: ‘siamo veramente le vittime del “colore”, i tentati dal “pezzo di costume”’; giuocare con le parole, e dietro non c’è niente. Ah i cattivi maestri!’; p. 319: ‘Mi accorgevo appena che la Callas ormai entrata spiegava il suo canto che non potevo cogliere se non nei soliti termini di “arcano”, di “misterioso”, di “sortilegio”’; footnote 11, p. 320: ‘vedi bene come non riesca a raccontartela altro che coi termini usati in certi poveri libri che solo qualche mandragora stanca si sente di leggere’; finally, Eric Alba’s *Les liaisons buissonnières* is quoted without inverted commas in the text and the quotation is made explicit in footnote 7, p. 319.

⁴⁴ Published under the title ‘Maria mito infelice’, *La Repubblica*, 14 September 1997. The four nouns ‘gioia’, ‘abisso’, ‘disperazione’ and ‘incanto’, plus ‘arcano’ and ‘sortilegio’ all appear in the text to connote the soprano.

davvero, mi sentivo altro che separato da ‘tutto il resto dell’uditorio’, dalla Scala, dal mondo, e le luci si riaccendessero, si potevano udir meraviglie, cambiare le scene, finire l’opera, gli applausi clamorosi non mi toccavano: ‘avulso dal contesto’, come niente; [...] (p. 321)

In this case the nominal construction is a predicative nominal clause, ‘avulso dal contesto’, an independent clause with an explicative value coordinated to ‘gli applausi clamorosi non mi toccavano’. Deprived of the verbal predicate and separated by a colon and a semicolon from the rest of the sentence, it stands out, concentrating in a formula the state of absent-mindedness caused by love. Yet this formula is also a quotation, as the inverted commas show, again very probably borrowed from journalistic writing; it also re-appears in an article by Arbasino written in 1995, again between inverted commas.⁴⁵ There is another quotation present in the co-text, ‘tutto il resto dell’uditorio’, again recognizable for its inverted commas. These quotations are other instances of platitudes, used to ironically point at the awareness that reality cannot but be expressed through commonplaces.

4.4.3 Open lists

The last device of nominal style I will discuss are lists. Although they will become a stylistic feature only in FI, as we have explained in the previous case study, also in RP it is possible to find lists with some sort of authorial connotation, which will be further developed in the following novel.

In PV there were nominal lists characterized by a highly visual, almost cinematographic, impact. In RP we do not find any of this sort, as the syntactic profile of the novel is not based on the on-the-spot report that legitimates the cinematographic list. Rather, RP is in tune with the long measures of the monologue. Therefore, lists tend to take the form of long accumulations of items or, rather, of potential long accumulations of items. Let us explain this point better with an example:

⁴⁵ The archive of *Corriere della Sera* registers 108 occurrences of ‘avulso dal contesto’ from 1945 to 2016; once it appears used in an article significantly entitled ‘Si è aperta alla Scala la stagione sinfonica’, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 May 1971. The archive of *La Repubblica* counts 68 occurrences from 1976 to 2016, one in an article on opera, Michelangelo Zurletti, ‘Addio, crudele regina di Saba’, *La Repubblica*, 31 January 1991, and one in an article by Arbasino, ‘Italiani, bravi razzisti’, *La Repubblica*, 1 February 1995.

- (36) Dovresti sinceramente credere che io mi sentivo molto profondamente commosso e turbato, ero appena capace di riflettere che ‘gioia-abisso-disperazione-incanto’; tutto d’ora in avanti dipenderebbe **da lui, da chi lui fosse, dal suo carattere, intenzioni, ecc.** (p. 320)

The list is made of four prepositional phrases all depending on ‘dipenderebbe’. At the end of the last (elliptical) phrase, though, there is no full stop, but an ‘etcetera’ that implies that the list is open to the addition of more elements and potentially longer. Suspension points can have a similar function:

- (37) [...] e se si tratta di italiani risucchiati facilmente **nel naturalismo, nell’Ottocento, nell’Arcadia, nel bozzetto...** mentre chi esagera nella direzione spiritosa rischia di cader giù dalla parte opposta: il caso **di Angus Wilson, di Truman Capote...** ma non anticipiamo. (p. 359)

In particular, the second list ‘di Angus Wilson, di Truman Capote’ is interrupted by the narrator, yet the suspension points indicate that it could have continued. We can read these open lists as the precursors of the long and cumulative lists in FI, where the potentiality of the ‘etcetera’ and suspension points is fulfilled. It has to be noted, however, that these lists are still very orderly in comparison to the chaotic and frenzied ones of the following novel.

In conclusion, we can affirm that nominal style does not have the same importance in RP it had in the previous work PV and will have in the following novel FI. Being linked to reportage style - especially in its most innovative forms - nominal style does not find much space in the long emotional or rational monologues of RP. Indeed, we find principally those types that are commonly used in narrative prose: ‘rhythmic’ nominal elements and, not mentioned above but present, appositions. However, it is still possible to glimpse uses of nominal style that have a more authorial signature: constructions that acquire visibility and incisiveness because nominal, which end up being quotations pointing at the subtle game played by the author; orderly lists that are however potentially expandable without limits.

To conclude the investigation on RP we can now look at punctuation.

4.5 Punctuation

In the sections devoted to the syntax of the sentence, we already had the chance to appreciate the role of punctuation in conveying some stylistic effects: the running style and fragmentation of the sentences in the narrative parts, the written profile of those in the argumentative parts. I would like now to examine more closely the functions of single punctuation marks.

4.5.1 Loose and Tight

On more than one occasion, I referred to a sentence as having a punctuation ‘weaker than expected’. By this, I meant the use of weak punctuation marks, above all comma, where from a logical-syntactic point of view a stronger punctuation mark (full stop, semicolon or colon) was required. In this way the sentence, especially if formed by many clauses, acquires a typical flowing effect, which mimics the narrator’s impelling need to tell:

(38) Nella realtà dovrei dirti che appena entrati in quel bar abbiamo incontrato un mio amico d’infanzia, che non rivedevo dagli anni più bui della guerra, mi ha riconosciuto lui e si è parlato un po’, **ma logicamente l’ho dovuto liquidare alla svelta, ecco come la vita non va d’accordo con la letteratura, guarda come riuscirebbe inopportuno un tale episodio inserito a questo punto,** mentre fatico bestialmente a liberarmi di queste prime pagine orribili che pure mi servono a mettere in moto il *plot*. (pp. 322-23)

The comma is the only punctuation mark used to link clauses within this sentence, even where the use of another mark would have more clearly signalled the function of some of the clauses. For example, the part highlighted in bold sees the passage from a series of actions that describe what the narrator and his old friend did (*incontrare, riconoscere, parlare, liquidare*) to a comment of the narrator on the episode, with the presentative clause ‘ecco come la vita non va d’accordo’. The sentence would benefit in terms of clarity from a stronger mark of this passage, as for example the full stop. Moreover, after the presentative we have a clause with an explicative value ‘guarda come riuscirebbe inopportuno’, which would more commonly be introduced by a colon than by a comma. Here is the proposed re-construction with a more logical-syntactic punctuation:

- (39) Nella realtà dovrei dirti che appena entrati in quel bar abbiamo incontrato un mio amico d'infanzia, che non rivedevo dagli anni più bui della guerra; mi ha riconosciuto lui e si è parlato un po', ma logicamente l'ho dovuto liquidare alla svelta. Ecco come la vita non va d'accordo con la letteratura: guarda come riuscirebbe inopportuno un tale episodio inserito a questo punto, mentre fatico bestialmente a liberarmi di queste prime pagine orribili che pure mi servono a mettere in moto il *plot*.

I have also replaced a comma with a semicolon between the main clause 'Nella realtà dovrei dirti' plus its subordinates and the coordinate 'mi ha riconosciuto'. A semi-colon is suggested because of the 'heaviness' of the main clause, on which two subordinates depend. Overall, we can notice how the passage loses its flowing character.

On the other hand, the very long sentences of argumentative text present a punctuation more respectful of its standard logical-syntactic functions. The semicolon, which rarely appears in the very long sentences of narrative text, has here its standard functions re-assigned:

- (40) La prova migliore è che non si sentono raccontare poi troppi fatti relativi a sfere diverse da quelle della zappa e della bicicletta - ma naturalmente non bisogna mai trascurare la circostanza che l'italiano, fisiologicamente, è anche scarso di immaginazione ed è congenitamente incapace di concepire trame e di orchestrare sviluppi in opere narrative; perciò la produzione di romanzi è tanto stentata da noi, e si capisce anche come mai riescano bene generalmente le 'opere prime', dove uno mette tutta la propria esperienza e tutto quello che sa; riesca già meno bene il secondo libro, dove, volere o no, bisogna cominciare a far lavorare la fantasia per inventare qualche cosa di nuovo; e il terzo libro, o è un disastro o non nasce. (pp. 359-60)

In this sentence, semicolons are used for two different aims: the first semicolon highlights the conceptual hierarchy by appearing just before the deductive-conclusive conjunction *perciò*; it signals that what follows is a conclusion of what precedes. All of the other semicolons have the function of signalling the coordination of complex units, namely of interrogative clauses + their subordinates embedded and other expansions: 'come mai riescano bene le "opere prime" [...]; riesca già meno bene il secondo libro [...]; e il terzo libro, o è un disastro o non nasce'.⁴⁶ We can appreciate the role of the semicolons if we compare it to that of the commas that also appear in this long sentence:

⁴⁶ Luca Serianni, 'Sul punto e virgola nell'italiano contemporaneo', *Studi linguistici italiani*, XXVII, 2 (2001), 248-55, pp. 253-55. Mortara Garavelli, *Prontuario di punteggiatura*, pp. 71-2.

commas are used between simple units (two coordinate clauses not much expanded or a main clause and its subordinate) or to isolate parentheticals. Semicolons are instead used between complex units or to signal a conceptual development. Therefore, although the sentence is long and elaborate, the distinction in functions between comma and semicolon helps the reader to identify hierarchical levels within the sentence and interpret its structure and meaning correctly. The overall effect of this 'tight' use of punctuation - meaning a use according to grammar, in opposition to the 'loose' one seen elsewhere - is of a text more oriented towards the written pole of language. Punctuation in this case does not have an expressive function, rather one according to the norm.

4.5.2 Omission and Redundancy

This section can be considered a continuation of the previous one: we will see cases where punctuation is so loose as to actually disappear and, by contrast, cases where punctuation seems redundant, and breaks with grammar conventions. Let us firstly take a look at the former:

(41) Mi accorgevo appena che la Callas ormai entrata spiegava il suo canto che non potevo cogliere se non nei soliti termini di 'arcano', di 'misterioso', di 'sortilegio', **e minuti e minuti passavano senza che i miei occhi riuscissero a lasciare i suoi al suono di una marcia trionfante non sapevo se esultare o tremare**, sfilava l'esercito portatore del vello d'oro e lui mi faceva cenno che non lo fissassi così ma le mani a un certo punto cominciano a cercarsi, anche se uno non ha mai letto *Pompes Funèbres* [...] (pp. 319-20)

This is the already quoted example of the narrator falling in love with Roberto: one of the moments of the narrator's loss of rationality, mirrored by the fast accumulation of clauses through cumulative *e* and commas. In the moments of higher emotion, however, any sort of punctuation, even the comma, disappears: we can see this happening between the two independent clauses coordinated '*e minuti e minuti passavano*' and '*al suono di una marcia trionfante non sapevo*'. Thus, the impression of linear flowing is maximised and the recreation of spoken prosody is preferred over the distinction of the syntactic elements composing the sentence.

Linearity and ‘speeding up’ effect is also favoured by the absence of exclamation marks for all of the exclamations present in this type of emotional sentence, as if not to interrupt the flow of the telling, for example:

- (42) pensa che ci sedevamo sui divanini a parlare, e non riesco a ricordare che cosa abbiamo detto, **ma**, ti assicuro, **neanche una parola**, comunque abbiamo scoperto di essere compagni della stessa università [...] (p. 321)

On the other hand, we find in the argumentative text uses of punctuation that diverge from the logical-syntactic ones, connoted by more expressive functions. These uses concern in particular the colon, as we can see in this example:

- (43) Finiva la guerra; e il cinema, che anche qui è arrivato a certi risultati prima della letteratura, scopriva questa sorprendente tecnica di rivelare alcune realtà nazionali non-ufficiali; e il partito comunista con tutti i suoi compagni di strada, in una clima culturale generalmente da barricate, ravvisava in quelle tristezze il solo autentico stile di sinistra, lo avallava con autorità: ma l’unico linguaggio a disposizione della infelice covata degli scrittori engagés erano le nuvolose astrazioni ereditate dall’ermetismo, prive di grammatica e di sintassi: con quei mezzi, si doveva fare del realismo... (p. 361)

The use of the colon in this passage deviates from grammar conventions in two ways: first of all, it appears twice in two consecutive clauses; secondly, it is used in a rather clashing combination with a coordinating conjunction, *ma*.⁴⁷ The consequences of these uses are a sort of short-circuit of the reader’s expectations, a disorientation. Indeed, the first colon appears unjustified as its conventional introductory or explicative values clash with the coordination established by conjunction *ma*; more apt to accompany *ma* would have been a semicolon. The second colon is instead conventionally justified, yet following the previous one, it forms a sequence of colons in consecutive clauses that again is not plain and conventional. Redundancy and contrast are specifically sought to create obstacles to a smooth fruition of the sentence and to arise the always latent self-reflexivity, like parentheticals in some cases did.

Moreover, these unconventional and estranging uses can be read as quotations from Gadda, the half-hidden addressee of the Anonimo’s letters, who frequently used ‘chains’ of colons and combinations of colon + coordinating conjunction in

⁴⁷ Mortara Garavelli, *Prontuario di punteggiatura*, p. 103.

his works.⁴⁸ The game played is therefore again that of inserting in the naturalistic narration elements that subtly allude at the repetitive and ‘quoting’ nature of literary discourse. It is a way to insinuate a critique of realism, which we saw is Arbasino’s idea of style and poetics, already present in embryo in PV, further developed in RP and finally theorised and perfected in FI and *Certi romanzi*. In FI for example the unconventional colon will become more decisively a stylistic feature, whereas in RP the phenomenon is still quite limited.

4.5.3 Spoken Prosody

We have mentioned already cases in which punctuation - or its absence - allows a spoken hint to emerge. Here I will show a last example of punctuation mimicking the prosody of spoken language:

- (44) Roberto disprezza la sua città con tutti gli abitanti che definisce ‘goffi’ oppure ‘cretini’, e aveva cominciato a entusiasarsi per Milano, pigliandola a esempio, ma adesso la trova sempre più cafona e non gli piace più, Roma non sa, ma la considera con sospetto, tutta l’Italia in blocco, lo stesso, Parigi non la prende in esame, ma penserà che sia una specie di cimitero, l’America certo è un suo ideale, però quella America delle riviste lucide, di certi film colorati come caramelle. (pp. 353-354)

Many elements in this sentence help convey a spoken flavour, for example the loose coordination of clauses through comma that we have observed many times, and the repetition of structures, in this case the combination independent clause+adversative coordinated clause: ‘aveva incominciato a entusiasarsi per Milano [...], ma adesso la trova [...], Roma non sa, ma la considera [...] Parigi non la prende in esame, ma penserà’ ecc. There are procedures that slim down the sentence, such as ‘lo stesso’ (a pro-clause that replaces the clause ‘la considera con sospetto’) or the ellipsis ‘Roma non sa (se gli piace)’. There are also frequent marked word orders, where the topic-given information is moved to the beginning of the clause to highlight and focus the attention on it. This is the case in the clauses beginning with the name of a city or country: ‘Roma non sa’, ‘tutta l’Italia in blocco, lo stesso’, ‘Parigi non la prende’ (‘l’America’ instead is in a non-marked order).

⁴⁸ Tonani, *Punteggiatura d’autore*, pp. 136-38.

It is in one of these clauses, ‘tutta l’Italia in blocco, lo stesso’, that we find an instance of prosodic comma: a type of comma that underlines intonational and informative borders. In fact, the comma in this clause marks the border between the topic-given information and syntactic object ‘tutta l’Italia in blocco’ and the comment-new information ‘lo stesso’ which, as we have said above, stands for ‘la considera con sospetto’. In doing so, the comma also graphically marks an intonational discontinuity between topic and comment, allowing in this way a spoken flavour to emerge. The use of prosodic comma is not new in Arbasino, since we saw it appears in PV as well; we will see it recurring more frequently in FI.

In summary, the analysis of punctuation has shown the contribution of punctuation marks to the general stylistic project of RP. Commas, colons and semicolons can deviate from conventional uses to recreate the prosody of spoken language or insinuate an element of estrangement and self-reflexivity; on the other hand, they can respect their logical-syntactic function and convey a more written mark, especially when compared to the parts where a looser punctuation is used.

4.6 Conclusion

Out of many stylistic choices tested in PV, Arbasino in this second work has chosen one specific path: the one that more clearly points to a style of writing that diverges from the standard, and is in some cases exceptional and excessive, aligning him with ‘irregular’ Italian authors of the past. The most important clue is the average horizontal extension and richness of the sentence, which clearly deviates from the standard of other narrative works as well as from the previous work PV, and is similar to Gadda’s experimental novel *Pasticciaccio*. Other fundamental syntactic features that mirror Arbasino’s growing anti-novelist, self-reflexive and critical approach to narrative are the frequent interruptions and obstacles to a smooth fruition of the sentence, performed through parentheticals and redundant punctuation, and the small but significant use of potentially open lists. Moreover, I argued that these interruptions and obstacles, together with other devices such as rhythmic alternations of lengths or

nominalizations, stage at the level of syntax the pervasive quoting drive that emerges at all levels of RP. In particular, I have found consonances between Arbasino's way of organizing sentences and using punctuation and that of experimental authors such as Gadda and Dossi; furthermore, I have shown how some nominal style devices are used to put stereotypical expressions from journalistic language under the spotlight.

However, excess and richness do not transform RP into a syntactically complex work overall: linearity is still a key characteristic of this work, and the occasional peaks of complexity, which make RP slightly more complex than other contemporary works, do not jeopardize the generally linear progression of the sentence. Data on depth of the sentence clearly show that RP falls within the standard of contemporary Italian. Moreover, excess and obstacles to a smooth reading cohabit with the recreation of spoken language and fluidity of writing, especially in the narrative parts of the text. Here very long sentences are structured on cumulative parataxis, with loose coordinating links, omission of subordinating conjunctions and interactive discourse markers that mimic an uncontrolled and unplanned spoken discourse; prosodic punctuation allows a spoken flavour to emerge. The result is not a mimesis of spoken language, but an artistic recreation of its accelerations, breaks, interactive nature. The argumentative parts are instead more oriented towards written values, with postposition of the main clause, higher number of subordinates and logical-syntactic or redundant punctuation; yet coordination of subordinates and non-finite subordinate clauses still keep complexity at *lingua media* levels.

To conclude, we can affirm that RP represents one step ahead in the development of Arbasino's syntax and style, clearly in the direction of experimentalism. The poetics of critical realism now visibly informs the artistic project, and syntactic structures also show that. The following and final step will be to see how this is further elaborated in what is considered Arbasino's masterpiece, FI.

5 Case Study 3. *Fratelli d'Italia*: A Stylistic Encyclopaedia

E la finalità del romanzo o del dramma dovrebbe essere prima di tutto il *divertimento*.
Arbasino, *Fratelli d'Italia*, p. 612

In this third case study I will analyse FI, the latest work in chronological order of those presented so far and the final phase of my enquiry in the syntax and style of Arbasino's early works. In many ways, FI can be considered a fundamental work, both in Arbasino's career and in Italian literature of the second half of the twentieth century.¹ The definitions of this work that have been given over fifty years, both by Arbasino himself and by critics - 'romanzo-conversazione', 'romanzo-saggio', 'romanzo sperimentale', 'scrittura di viaggio', 'gran commedia dei nostri anni Sessanta' - all catch an aspect of this novel but not the whole picture. Indeed, FI can be seen as a catalogue of styles, techniques, genres experimented in the previous works but now included in a more ambitious and demanding narrative project and informed by the author's poetics of *realismo critico*, at this point fully embraced and relevant to all aspects of the novel.

At the basis of FI there is, as it was the case in PV and RP, Arbasino's desire to realistically depict a particular social environment, here that of young, intellectual *media borghesia* during the years of the Economic Boom.² As before, the plot is not particularly elaborate (despite the five-hundred and thirty-two pages) and sees a group of friends of different nationalities - one Italian and one French writer, a German musician and the Swiss first-person narrator - set off for a journey around Italy in order to shoot a film. The film will soon become a chimera, and the group ends up touring from one socialite party to another and from one cultural event to the other, witnessing the changes brought by Economic Miracle on Italian culture and society from an upper middle class perspective.

¹ The author himself, when asked which work would choose as his favourite ever, indicated the 1963 version of FI. Giuseppe Rizzo, 'Alberto Arbasino', *Rivista studio* (24 January 2014), <<http://www.rivistastudio.com/standard/alberto-arbasino/>>, accessed 26 January 2015.

² D'Antuono identifies the interest in capturing the present, doing an on-the-spot report as the first desire, at the basis of Arbasino's writing. D'Antuono, *Forme e significati in Alberto Arbasino*, pp. 29-30.

However, unlike the previous works, in FI we strongly sense the intention to seize the present, photographing the way the young, *medio borghesi* intellectuals, protagonists of the story, live and interact in the late 1950s. The events are narrated by a homodiegetic first-person narrator, in the present tense; moreover, the frequent references to the 'here and now' of the situation and the use of impersonal nominal constructions convey an idea of fast movement and dynamism, as well as of objectivity and impersonality. The incipit is a powerful example of that, with its sense of immediacy and contemporaneity (present tense, deictics) as well as fast movement and haste (the idea of people moving by plane and of not having time):

Siamo qui a Fiumicino aspettando due amici di Antonio che arrivano adesso da Parigi, un francese e un americano, e non abbiamo ancora avuto un momento per parlare della nostra estate.

Basically the narrator observes and reports what is happening around him, without psychological insights into other characters, but just purely 'external' descriptions and telling. We are faced with reportage, a style that dates back to the first work PV, here raised to the level of main technique of the novel.

This reportage style draws on two of the main passions of the author, besides literature: journalism and cinema, which Arbasino further cultivates in the years following the writing of PV and RP. In the late 1950s, he starts to collaborate with various journals, such as *Tempo Presente* and *Il Mondo*, writing reportage, portraits, reviews, some of which are collected in a 1960 volume entitled *Parigi o cara*. At the same time, he works on the film adaptation of his short story *La bella di Lodi* with Missiroli (which appears in cinemas in 1962) as well as closely following the filming of *La dolce vita*.³ The fascination with cinema gets to the point that this art is thematised in FI: as we have seen, the protagonists set to travel around Italy to shoot a film, *L'Italia si chiama Amore*.⁴ Some of the formal

³ Arbasino lives in Rome at the time, and habitually spends his free time in cafés and restaurants in the company of journalists, writers, screenwriters, directors, actors that formed the Roman intellectual and artistic élite, among whom Fellini and Flaiano.

⁴ All novels written after FI, between the end of 1960s and the early 1970s, have a strong connection with cinema: *Super-Eliogabalo* and *Il principe costante* are adaptations of theatre works and were initially conceived as scripts for cinema or tv; *La bella di Lodi* published in 1972 is mostly re-written and influenced by the film of the same name that came out in 1962; *Specchio delle mie brame* contains a number of quotations and references from films; for the same reason according to Pedullà also FI can be added to the group. Pedullà, 'Cinema',

techniques of journalism and cinema seem therefore to influence directly Arbasino's literary writing, especially, as we will see, in terms of increase in nominal style and linearity, in order to convey dynamism, objectivity and higher visual impact.

Alongside such dynamism, there is also a static element connoting the life of the protagonists of FI: namely, when the narrator or the protagonists produce long monologues reflecting or conversing on topics such as the theory of the novel, life and career paths of intellectuals, music, theatre, the change of landscapes and of upper-class habits brought by the Economic Boom. These more essayistic parts are characterised by long sentences, nominal appositions and suspension points, hence the generic impression of stasis and reflection. They depict the way intellectuals engaged in conversations at the time, and for this reason they are also characterized by a layer of *parlato*, the informal everyday language of educated *media borghesia*. Arbasino declared, several decades after the publication of the first edition of FI:

L'idea era sempre stata quella di riprodurre in contemporanea il parlato che si usava allora. Si trattava del parlato di una conversazione colta, di un certo livello, come non credo che ne esistano più, oggi. In un certo senso, *Fratelli d'Italia* costituisce una testimonianza dell'epoca, in quanto in quegli anni le conversazioni colte erano caratterizzate nei modi rappresentati in quel libro.⁵

The recreation of the present time from a linguistic point of view informs both 'dynamic' and 'static' parts, and justifies Arbasino's labelling of FI as *romanzo-conversazione*, a novel that recreates a specific social condition through its language.⁶

Still, reporting the life and language of intellectuals represents only part of the artistic project. Although the older Arbasino seems keen on putting the stress

pp. 263-65. However, the fascination with cinema I believe can be traced also from as early as PV, as shown in the first case study.

⁵ Fausto Curi, Alberto Arbasino, 'Sessanta e non più Sessanta. Intervista ad Alberto Arbasino di Fausto Curi', in *Alfabeta* 2, 16 November 2013, <<http://www.alfabeta2.it/2013/11/16/sessanta-e-non-piu-sessanta/>>, accessed 27 January 2015.

⁶ As Arbasino argues, 'linea narrativa e linea saggistica però non separate in capitoli distinti come nel *Doktor Faustus*: ma compenstrate per mezzo della conversazione'. Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, p. 1228.

just on the documentary value of the first edition of FI, at the time of its writing the ambition was also and above all that of writing a modern experimental novel, motivated by a radical dissatisfaction towards the modes of representation of Neorealism and in general of Italian narrative. In Arbasino's view, at the end of the 1950s much Italian narrative still retains most of its traditional features (third-person narration, past historic, linear narrative), combined with the use of *lingua media*, the average Italian that is starting to spread among the population. For Arbasino, the problem with this type of narrative is that it does not take into account the most recent discoveries in philosophical, linguistics and literary fields (such as phenomenology, semiotics, structuralism) and tries to maintain an illusion of naturalistic representation of reality.

Arbasino's reaction to this is planning a literary work that upholds instead a critical realism, inspired by Flaubert and other modernist writers. We saw that elements of critical realism already emerged in PV, and that in RP this poetics inspires the artistic project. However, in FI objectification and self-reflexivity will be further intensified as Arbasino, influenced by the structuralist way of analysing cultural artefacts, selects and synthesizes more refined linguistic devices, styles and genres that will help him to convey reality and at the same time parody it. For example, devices such as nominal style and lists will appear with high frequency only in this novel, contributing greatly, together with parataxis, to the objectification of language. Similarly, the re-use of *medio borghese* linguistic tics will only here become a key stylistic feature of the novel; and the use of the two categories of 'static' and 'dynamic' with their corresponding styles, the on-the-spot report and the reflective monologue, will be fully exploited as formal elements recreating the reality of the protagonists. Moreover, in FI the playful attitude will reveal itself as much more pervasive than in the previous works, in particular in the use of phonic games and suffixation spread throughout the novel, not to mention the histrionic invention of words and characters' names, which unfortunately we will not have time to examine: further investigations would probably place Arbasino in the same line

of the most inventive minds of twentieth century Italian literature, Gadda and Calvino.⁷

Also the self-reflexive and citational drive, already well represented in RP, will prove enhanced but at the same time will reach a more harmonic synthesis in FI. Self-reflexivity emerges in different aspects, thematic and structural: the protagonists are often portrayed while going to performances such as plays, operas and concerts, or discussing the genre of the novel. Moreover, they are all involved in artistic productions such as making a film, writing a novel, composing an opera, mostly unsuccessfully. Antonio, in particular, is a novelist trying to write a novel, which he thinks to entitle *Fratelli d'Italia*.⁸ He encounters several creative and theoretical difficulties and ultimately does not manage to write it, although, at the end of FI, the narrator finds Antonio's notebook with some notes for the novel he would like to write, which coincide with the beginning of FI itself: in other words, the novel ends with a *mise en abyme*. Another self-reflexive characteristic of the structure will be the presence of narrative and essayistic parts in the novel, with the latter containing discussions on the crisis of the traditional novel, and the possible paths to renovate this genre.⁹ However, compared to RP where the *romanzo-saggio* firstly occurred, the two parts will look more harmonized in linguistic terms, both oriented towards spoken values. Furthermore, quotations and allusions to other works will appear more smoothly integrated and hidden in the text in FI, instead of being plainly visible as footnotes at the end of the text as in RP.

The aim of this case study, as in the previous ones, is the investigation of the syntax of the sentence and of other noteworthy syntactic devices of FI; by doing so, I will assess their contribution to the style of the novel and connection to the artistic world view of our author. For example, I will look at the presence of

⁷ Some examples. Names of people: Sir Fulk Greville, la Fragolona, la Canobbiana, il Nanibus, la Mère Hibou, Violeuse, Madeuse, Berceuse, Boudeuse, Brandoleuse, Arrivabeuse; names of villas: la Veremunda, la Vidigulfa, la Calvignana, la Staghiolona, la Braila; names of cats and dogs: la Serenissima, la Dominante, il Dancairo, il Remendado.

⁸ "Come volevi intitolarlo?" chiede Jean-Claude. "Probabilmente *Le italiche fatiche*, come all'inizio del Decennale Primo di Machiavelli [...]. O *Le mura e gli archi*, come nella Canzone all'Italia di Leopardi; o *Le piaghe mortali*, come nella Canzone all'Italia di Petrarca. O anche forse *Fratelli d'Italia*." FI, p. 625. The possible titles of the novel are all quotations.

⁹ Narrative and essay intertwine also 'outside' the novel, in the dialogue between the novel, FI, and the essay on the novel, *Certi romanzi*, both written by Arbasino.

constructions or devices that communicate the ideas of dynamism and stasis; that convey objectivity, impersonality and visual impact or objectification and loss of meaning of language; that allow the recreation of *parlato* or the surfacing of a parodic and playful treatment of the linguistic sign. Moreover, I will compare FI with RP, with other authors contemporary to Arbasino and with contemporary Italian: this will allow us to assess both Arbasino's stylistic development and its position in the Italian literary landscape. As usual, the analysis will be carried out with the help of statistical data, which will be compared with data from corpora of contemporary written and spoken Italian; data concerning the syntax of other authors, both experimental and non-experimental; and also data from the previous case studies. In the analysis, I have taken into account the presence of a diegetic as well as a mimetic level in the work, and examined them separately: the distinction also allows us to appreciate to what extent Arbasino is differentiating the narrator's discourse from the characters' discourse. Moreover, differences are made concerning genres between these two levels, namely reportage and monologues in diegetic parts, dialogues and monologues in mimetic parts.

5.1 Length and Composition of the Sentence

As in the previous case studies, we will start by looking at the length and composition of the sentence in FI, which will give us a general idea on the direction chosen for the novel in terms of syntax and style, before examining the sentence's internal links in the next section.

5.1.1 Length

The table below shows the average number of words in a sentence and the percentages of different lengths in diegesis and mimesis:

Table 5-1 – Length FI

| | FI diegesis | FI mimesis |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Average n. of words per sentence | 25.91 | 17.17 |
| Short sentences (1-15 words) | 45.36% | 74.24% |
| Medium sentences (16-30 words) | 23.5% | 14.39% |
| Medium-long sentences (31-45 words) | 14.75% | 3.79% |
| Long sentences (46-60 words) | 7.65% | 1.9% |
| Very long sentences (over 60 words) | 8.74% | 5.68% |

In this table there are some data that are relevant for our analysis: first of all, the quite lengthy average of diegesis, resulting from a majority of short and medium sentences (together 68.9%) merging with not negligible percentages of medium-long, long and very long sentences (together 31.1%). Secondly, the lengthy average of mimesis as well, which, although shorter than that of diegesis, still appears on the long side, with a 5.7% of very long sentences. Let us examine the two levels separately, starting from diegesis.

Diegesis

That FI diegesis tends to have longer sentences than the standard for narrative is confirmed by the comparison with corpora of written Italian. From this comparison, it emerges that FI is closer to essays, thus generally more elaborated texts, rather than to narrative writing. According to the corpus *Penelope* by Policarpi and Rombi, educational literary essays count 28.29 words per sentence, while narrative counts 17.5 words per sentence.¹⁰ These data seem confirmed by the survey made by Lepschy and Raponi, who found that an Umberto Eco essay has 26.3 words per sentence and by De Mauro's enquiry on PTLLIN, which tells us that just five novels out of a hundred exceed the average of 25 words per sentence. Finally, they are confirmed also by my own calculation on an emblematic text of *lingua media*, Ginzburg's *Lessico familiare* (1963), which counts 18.3 words per sentence.¹¹ The table below allows us to better picture the comparisons made:

¹⁰ Policarpi, Rombi, 'Tendenze nella sintassi dell'italiano contemporaneo', p. 150.

¹¹ Lepschy, Raponi, 'Il movimento della norma nell'italiano contemporaneo', p. 14. 'La statistica rivela che solo in rari casi viene varcato il limite di 25 parole per frase: Volponi, *La macchina*

Table 5-2 – Length: Comparison FI, Eco, Lessico

| | FI diegesis | Eco's essay | Lessico diegesis |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| Average n. of words per sentence | 25.9 | 26.3 | 18.3 |

In other words, FI is closer in terms of length to linguistically elaborated texts such as essays rather than to contemporary narrative, especially that written in *stile semplice*. The parallel with Arbasino's previous works comes naturally at this point: as the horizontal expansion of the sentence in some of the short stories of PV and especially in RP was a means to contrast the Neorealist style, in FI it is a way to distance itself from the new standard in narrative writing, i.e. *lingua media*, by now the new 'enemy' to oppose.

In fact we saw in the first chapter that expanding the sentence horizontally is a common feature of those writers that go beyond the standard realizations of *lingua media* for experimental, expressionist or lyrical aims. In the study carried out by Mauroni on the syntax of the sentence of four Italian authors writing in the 1970s and 1980s, those having the highest percentages of long sentences are Volponi and Bufalino, authors that programmatically reject *lingua media*.¹² Similarly, Mariarosa Bricchi points out the horizontal extension of the sentence of *Nuovo commento* (1969) by Manganelli, an author known for his baroque writing; while Antonelli underlines that 'un tipo di periodo lungo e involuto, ma basato su una struttura paratattica, caratterizza anche la sintassi degli scrittori che *grosso modo* possono essere ascritti alla linea espressionistica' and quotes examples from Gadda, Sanguineti, Consolo and Manganelli.¹³ The length of the sentence is therefore an important parameter that can tell us something about the style of FI, reflecting the general intention of breaking with the norm.

On the other hand, we should also acknowledge that a reduction in length has in fact occurred in comparison with RP:

mondiale (27,66), Cialente (27,29), Magris, *Danubio* (29,62) e *Microcosmi* (27,35), Riccarelli (26,57)', De Mauro, PTLLIN, p. 42. For *Lessico familiare* being a novel written in *lingua media* see Testa, *Lo stile semplice*, p. 291 and Coletti, *Storia dell'italiano letterario*, p. 360.

¹² Mauroni, 'La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei', pp. 222-23.

¹³ Bricchi, 'Note sulla sintassi di *Nuovo commento*', pp. 104-5; Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', p. 691 (italics by the author).

Table 5-3 – Length: Comparison RP, FI

| | RP | FI diegesis |
|-------------------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Average n. of words per sentence | 39.63 | 25.91 |
| Short sentences (1-15 words) | 40.32% | 45.36% |
| Medium sentences (16-30 words) | 23.39% | 23.5% |
| Medium-long sentences (31-45 words) | 7.26% | 14.75% |
| Long sentences (46-60 words) | 8.87% | 7.65% |
| Very long sentences (over 60 words) | 20.16% | 8.74% |

What immediately stands out is that the average number of words per sentence goes from a very high 40 words per sentence in RP to ‘just’ an average of 26 words in FI diegesis. This is determined by an increase in FI in the use of short and medium-long sentences, and conversely by a remarkable reduction in very long sentences.

Why has this change happened? The reason lies in the style chosen: shorter sentences are more functional to the construction of the informal on-the-spot report at the basis of the narrative parts of the text of FI, whereas in RP the extreme dilatation was more functional to reflect an emotional narration. Let us see an example:

- (1) Siamo già indietro a riva, coricati a pancia in giù. Tutti con le dita sotto la sabbia a cercare dei molluschi piccolissimi, buoni da mangiare, imitando Moravia che ha cominciato e ne trova più degli altri, qualche decina di metri più in là, con la ragazza fiorentina appena arrivata, e butta via gusci e conchigliette da tutte le parti.

Desideria arriva di corsa, chiamando, coi capelli legati e la testa improvvisamente minuscola, infantile. Si butta nell’acqua, nuota a bracciate forti. Dopo un minuto è a cento metri, che fa degli spruzzi. Gli altri finiscono per raggiungerla.

Prendo un po’ di sole. Giorgio esce dall’acqua e viene lì a dire che ci siamo già visti. L’occasione, però, non ce la ricordiamo: né l’uno né l’altro. (p. 700)

This passage well exemplifies Arbasino’s desire to capture the present, his idea of representation of reality: the first-person, homodiegetic narrator is plainly reporting what is happening around him, without any judgement or psychological insight. Actions or events follow one another sequentially as in a filmic sequence, with the narrator’s eye replacing the camera. Syntactically, this is

translated into a sequence of mainly short and medium sentences, juxtaposed one to the other in a lean, dynamic, almost broken style. An additional contribution is made by constructions that point at a recreation of spoken and informal Italian, such as nominal style ('Tutti con le dita sotto la sabbia'), cleft sentences ('Dopo un minuto è a cento metri, che fa degli spruzzi'), and dislocations ('L'occasione, però, non ce la ricordiamo').

This informal reportage brings us back to the 'laboratory' of PV, to the parts of *Agosto* and *Blue jeans* especially, where this style made its first appearance. The shift from RP is probably due to the change in genre: RP was a parody of the romantic epistolary novels with essayistic elements, and it aimed at decisively breaking with traditional naturalist narration, hence the very long emotional or rational sentences. The on-the-spot report was not an option there, since the epistolary implies the narration of previously occurring facts. In FI, Arbasino instead chooses a narration contemporary to the facts narrated, by a first-person narrator that witnesses what is happening around him. The choice goes therefore towards more modern models, cinema and journalism.

The main difference between the reportage at its beginnings in PV and the one developed in FI is the insertion of parodic, critical elements (as we saw these elements start to emerge with more strength from RP) in the dynamic representation of reality. These are often carried by longer sentences, which indeed in *Agosto* and *Blue jeans* did not appear very often:

- (2) Raimondo è vispissimo, ha pensato a tutto. L'insalata, i grissini, il riso freddo con gli scampi e le olive l'hanno già avuto quasi tutti. Ci sono sulle tavole dei pomodori, del prosciutto, delle ciliegie, e (mi pare) basta. Da bere, invece, proprio soltanto champagne. **Mentre s'arriva su portano dentro una caldaia di salsicce e lenticchie con la Judy dietro che aiuta, seria in faccia e mestolo in mano, e dopo un minuto la Canobbiana servita per prima soffia con forza sopra le sue lenticchie con una salsiccia intera in bocca, esclamando in milanese tra ogni soffiata e l'altra "che bontà! che bontà! che bontà!"**. (pp. 769-70)

The passage is composed firstly of brief sentences one after the other that fix a single event or action, followed then by a longer sentence that condenses together a series of actions, where more characters act at the same time. The entire passage appears very filmic, with short sentences corresponding to close-ups focusing on details and longer sentences as long shots including more

characters moving or interacting. Informality and colloquiality are assured by the presence of typical syntactic devices of spoken language. These are: a dislocation ('L'insalata, i grissini [...] l'hanno già avuto'), the apocope of some verbs, which reproduces the quick and casual pronunciation in spoken and informal situations ('son', 'picchiar'); the use of the article in front of a person's name ('la Judy'), and of the preposition reinforcing the verb ('arriva su') that point to an Italian with Northern influences.¹⁴

However, the impression of objectivity is disrupted by the accumulation of actions present in the long sentence. If we look at its structure, we can see that it is mainly composed of independent clauses coordinated one to the other; whenever linearity is broken, it is with participial or nominal structures ('servita per prima', 'seria in faccia e mestolo in mano'). This type of agile syntactic structure, called 'dynamic parataxis' as we will see in the next section, inserted in a long sentence communicates a sense of action in progress, of dynamism, but also of accumulation. It is therefore functional in conveying a sense of contemporaneity and on-the-spot report, but at the same time it contributes to adding a parodic element in the representation of reality put into place. Indeed, the passage carries a parodic component that the narrator (as we are seeing the scene through his perspective) mainly directs at the representation of the upper-class that participates at the party, and in particular of the character of la Canobbiana, an upper-class old lady, but not that refined and polite after all.

Another type of long sentence carrying a parodic connotation in the narrative text is the list. Lists are one of the main stylistic features of FI, which did not appear in such a pervasive and excessive way (in terms of length) in the previous works. As Lucchelli showed in her study on the typescript and the first edition of FI, it is in the passage from typescript to printed text that this rhetorical and syntactic device increased and consolidated.¹⁵ We can argue that nominal lists perfectly embody elements of Arbasino's vision of the work of art. Indeed, the paratactic and lean structure of lists, where objects are put one after the other loosely connected, allows the hiding of the author's perspective and a general

¹⁴ Berretta, 'Il parlato italiano contemporaneo', p. 266.

¹⁵ Cinzia Lucchelli, 'Sull'elaborazione strutturale e stilistica dell'edizione '63 di *Fratelli d'Italia*', in Clelia Martignoni, Elisabetta Cammarata, Cinzia Lucchelli, *La scrittura infinita di Alberto Arbasino* (Novara: Interlinea, 1999), pp. 23-67 (p. 25).

impression of objectivity: lists present themselves as an inventory of things of reality, and the high rate of nouns makes it very visual, cinematographic. Lists are used for example in types of writing that want to convey an objective, realistic depiction of a situation, such as journalistic writing.¹⁶ However, the chaotic nature of Arbasino's lists, with objects of consumerism, people, gestures and pieces of conversation all put on the same level, reveals a reifying intention, where reality is quoted in such a way to elicit a reflection on it, if only for playful purposes. We can notice the playful phonic games (alliterations, homoteleuton, onomatopoeia) that occur throughout the following passage:

- (3) Tutto uno sbattere di liftiers, commessi, commesse, fattorini, mani tese, mance, inchini, il resto che arriva - 'pluff' - per tubo pneumatico nei negozi, mucchi di cashmere sui banconi di legno, copie del "Times" che scivolano sotto la porta, tintinnii di caffettiere, sforbiciature di parrucchieri, carta lucida, nastri colorati, pullovers infilati dalla testa, vestaglie di seta che volano, profumi provati col tappo di vetro sul dorso della mano, scontri rapidissimi in ascensore fra uno che sale e uno che esce, "dove vai?", "torno subito, ho una cosa!", seggiole messe o tolte di sotto a Desideria, Luigi che assaggia il vino e dice che va bene, applausi a teatro davanti al sipario che s'abbassa e si chiude. (p. 1062)

In other words, lists are one of the syntactic and stylistic devices that best embody Arbasino's *realismo critico*: as such, a section will be devoted to them during the analysis of nominal style.

The third type of long sentence is of a different kind. It appears in parts of the text that recreate the narrator's monologue, where he reflects and expresses opinions on issues concerning various aspects of culture; for this reason, these parts get closer to argumentative text. Here the on-the-spot, dynamic report is replaced by a more static sequence of thoughts, which is mirrored in the syntactic structure by the use of long sentences where suspension points substitute other punctuation marks and blur the borders of the sentence, as in the following passage:

- (4) Ma in quei brutti anni, così effimero era stato il risveglio delle curiosità culturali dopo la guerra... pareva proprio che nessuno si muovesse se non per leggere qualche libro straniero mal tradotto o qualche periodico italiano mal scritto... tutt'al più il bestseller intellettuale che compare un anno sì e uno no... e tutti lo succhiano come una caramella nello stesso

¹⁶ Dardano, 'Il linguaggio dei giornali italiani', p. 293.

momento... citando per qualche mese solo quello... come una formula magica... salvo sputarlo fuori appena spremuto... e dimenticarsene appena compare il successivo... (p. 982)

We can recall that also RP had essayistic parts composed of very long sentences, where however more typically written features emerged, compared to the narrative text. In FI instead it seems there is the intention to keep a more marked impression of spoken language also in these parts, signalled in the sentence above by the use of suspension points, of a discourse marker at the beginning of the passage ('Ma') and by the more informal and colloquial replacement of the relative clause with 'e' + direct object pronoun ('il bestseller intellettuale che compare un anno sì e uno no... e **che** tutti succhiano' > '**e** tutti lo succhiano').

Mimesis

As outlined already, the average of 17.2 words per sentence in mimesis is quite high. The comparison with Voghera's corpus of spoken language indeed situates the mimetic level of FI between a university lecture (15.9 words per sentence) and a conference lecture (21.6 words per sentence), therefore among monologues held in public and formal situations.¹⁷ Yet FI mimesis does not represent that type of situation, rather more informal and private ones; moreover, not all of the mimetic parts are monologues, there are also dialogues. Therefore, as in the case of PV - whose average is just slightly lower than that of FI, 15.3 words per sentence - FI mimesis goes beyond the averages of informal spoken dialogues or monologues in real situations.¹⁸ The average of FI mimesis also decisively exceeds that of *Lessico familiare*, as the table shows:

¹⁷ Voghera, *Sintassi e intonazione dell'italiano parlato*, p. 185.

¹⁸ Voghera, *Sintassi e intonazione dell'italiano parlato*, p. 185; Cresti, *Corpus di italiano parlato*, I, 243.

Table 5-4 – Length: Comparison FI, Lessico mimesis

| | FI mimesis | Lessico mimesis |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Average n. of words per sentence | 17.17 | 5.94 |
| Short sentences (1-15 words) | 74.24% | 97.18% |
| Medium sentences (16-30 words) | 14.39% | 2.82% |
| Medium-long sentences (31-45 words) | 3.79% | 0 |
| Long sentences (46-60 words) | 1.9% | 0 |
| Very long sentences (over 60 words) | 5.68% | 0 |

The mimetic level of *Lessico* consists almost entirely of short sentences, and no sentences above thirty words, whereas FI counts the presence of medium-long, long and also very long sentences. As in the case of diegesis, length seems linked to the style chosen: a comparison with data in Mauroni's study confirms the division between works in *lingua media* and works that go beyond *lingua media* also for the mimetic level. The former count normally one to ten words per sentence, maximum thirty-five words; the latter also have high percentages of short sentences, but they can have 'periodi lunghi, anzi lunghissimi fino all'abnormità espressiva'.¹⁹

The presence of both short and long measures in FI depends on the genre of spoken language represented. Short sentences, those with the highest percentage, are mostly found in dialogues, as in this example:

- (5) 'Guarda: come persona è delizioso, umano, proprio simpatico' gli fa Antonio. 'Pronto a aiutare gli altri, a farsi in quattro... Mai che dimentichi un onomastico...'
 'Perché? Perché? Loosci?' gli chiede preoccupato questo Giorgio.
 'Naturale! Loosciamo tutti, qui; fin troppo! Ma come regista, senti... francamente...' (p. 968)

The exchanging of information in a high turnover, the interruptions, suspensions, direct question and exclamations used help keep sentences short. Actually, here Arbasino is close to the configuration of real dialogues: as Voghera points out, in dialogues 'l'avvicinarsi dei turni è uno dei vincoli più forti alla lunghezza

¹⁹ Mauroni, 'La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei', p. 222.

dell'enunciato'.²⁰ Not only: devices such as interruptions, suspensions, direct questions, etc. are typical of spoken interactions, and point to a more convincing recreation of spoken language than in the previous work PV, where dialogues were excluded. In FI instead the quick and lively dialogic exchange is the equivalent on the mimetic level of the on-the-spot report, insofar as it impresses on the page dynamism and rapidity. However, the narrator still retains some control over the characters' discourse, as indicated by the indication of the way the utterance is performed 'gli chiede preoccupato'.

The genre of spoken discourse where Arbasino moves away from the standard in terms of length is the monologue. In monologues, short sentences of the type seen above and medium sentences cohabit with very long sentences, which can be as long as two-hundred words. In reality, these parts would still technically be dialogues, yet they are structured in such a way that one of the interlocutors is dominating the conversation, explaining, reflecting, or arguing about something, and the other interlocutor works just as a sort of stimulus that triggers further reflections; that is why I will refer to them as monologues. We can see an example:

- (6) 'Non sembrerà la rivista dei vigili?'
 'No, niente, deciso. Il primo numero è già pronto, esce in questi giorni. C'è dentro di tutto, hanno fatto prestissimo. Un saggio sulla distinzione fra l'uso simbolico del linguaggio nella scienza, e l'uso emotivo nella poesia. Un altro saggio sulla "vergine conculcata" nell'opera di Puccini. Un altro sugli "objets trouvés" dalla Vita del Cellini (quando gli capitavano sulla spiaggia quei legni dalle forme allusive) a quelle mostre che si fanno a Parigi e in America con gli scatoloni di vetro riempiti con residui di "poubelles"... e costano carissimi... e poi esplodono sugli Aubusson... con dei gas solforosi... Però nello stesso numero l'Arcangelo fa un editoriale contro tutta l'arte moderna, in favore della "opera chiusa"... Quindi, tutto a posto.' (p. 978)

These parts almost resemble interviews, where one interlocutor asks a question or makes a brief comment and the other replies more extensively. Surely, they are influenced by the journalistic activity that Arbasino is conducting in these years, especially the interviews with many authors, politicians and artists around

²⁰ Voghera, *Sintassi e intonazione nell'italiano parlato*, p. 186; see on the topic also Emanuela Cresti, who affirms: 'In questi ultimi [i contesti strettamente dialogici] proprio l'interattività è all'origine di una alternanza rapida della turnazione e di una diminuzione dello spazio di parola con conseguente diminuzione della M[edia] L[unghezza] E[nunciato]'. Cresti, *Corpus di italiano parlato*, I, p. 242.

the world.²¹ Recently, Arbasino also declared that the interview was the typical way he interacted with other intellectuals, especially older ones (such as Gadda, Testori, Pasolini, etc.) he used to meet in Rome.²²

On the other hand, Arbasino might want to quote ‘philosophical’ dialogues, that is, dialogues with the function of intellectual debates, typically used in Enlightenment essay novels (or *contes-philosophiques*).²³ The quotation of philosophical dialogues fits very well with the re-use of other works that informs the artistic vision of Arbasino in those years, as well as pointing at Arbasino’s fascination with Enlightenment that had already emerged in RP. Therefore, in these parts of direct speech we can easily recall both realistic and critical elements, the base of Arbasino’s view of the work of art. Linguistically, we find both argumentative structures (see the correlative construction ‘Un saggio [...] Un altro saggio [...] Un altro’) and elements of informal spoken language, such as examples of subordination (relative *che*) replaced by the cumulative coordinating conjunction *e* (‘a quelle mostre che si fanno a Parigi e in America con gli scatoloni di vetro riempiti con residui di “poubelles”... che costano carissimi... e che poi esplodono’ > ‘e costano carissimi... e poi esplodono’).

Remarkably, these monologues in mimesis are very similar to the narrator’s monologues in diegesis, both in syntactic and in thematic terms: they concern cultural and intellectual issues, they use argumentative structures, they use suspension points to mimic the reflective and suspensive tone of a person speaking and thinking at the same time. It will be clearer as the analysis proceeds that narrator’s monologues and characters’ monologues are the parts where the syntactic distinctions between diegesis and mimesis are weakest, and where therefore the idea of an uninterrupted discourse that crosses both levels manifests itself more clearly.

²¹ See for example the article ‘Una sera da Aron’, written in 1961: the interview with Raymond Aron is carried on in a very similar way to the one used in FI. Alberto Arbasino, ‘Una sera da Aron’, in Alberto Arbasino, *Parigi o cara* (Milan: Adelphi, 2004), pp. 125-34.

²² Interview with Arbasino by Loredana Lipperini during the radio programme *Fahrenheit* (Radio3) of 16 July 2014.

²³ Examples of intellectual dialogues can be found, according to Coletti, in Leopardi’s *Operette morali*, in some parts of Manzoni’s *I promessi sposi*, and, more recently, in ‘Enlightenment writers’ such as Sciascia and Morselli. Coletti, ‘Con voce più alta e stizzosa’, pp. 54-5.

5.1.2 Composition of the sentence

Continuing this section on the general profile of the sentence in FI, we will now consider the composition of the sentence:

Table 5-5 – Composition FI

| | FI diegesis | FI mimesis |
|---|-------------|------------|
| Average no. of clauses per sentence | 3.43 | 3.07 |
| % of single-clause sentences | 31.25% | 50.78% |
| % of two-clause sentences | 19.32% | 16.41% |
| % of three-clause sentences | 11.93% | 12.89% |
| % of sentences with more than 3 clauses | 37.5% | 19.92% |

What stands out in this table is surely the closeness of the diegetic and mimetic levels in terms of average number of clauses per sentence. Three clauses per sentence is quite a high average, especially for the mimetic level. Let us explore more in detail this aspect for the two levels.

Diegesis

In diegesis sentences with multiple clauses are the most frequent, followed by single-clause sentences. Thus, we have here an alternation of two extremes, together making up almost 70% of the total. The prevalence of sentences with more than three clauses seems to be a feature of narrative works that expand their sentence horizontally, exceeding the limits of *lingua media*: for example Volponi's and Bufalino's works; whereas works that maintain the language within the range of *lingua media* (Morselli's and Tobino's) have higher percentages of single-clause and two-clause sentences.²⁴ This is the case also of *Lessico familiare*, as we can see in the table below in comparison with FI:

²⁴ Mauroni, 'La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei', pp. 224-28.

Table 5-6 – Composition: Comparison FI, Lessico diegesis

| | FI diegesis | Lessico diegesis |
|---|-------------|------------------|
| Average no. of clauses per sentence | 3.43 | 2.79 |
| % of single-clause sentences | 31.25% | 29.51% |
| % of two-clause sentences | 19.32% | 31.15% |
| % of three-clause sentences | 11.93% | 11.48% |
| % of sentences with more than 3 clauses | 37.5% | 27.87% |

The two works have similar percentages of single-clause and three-clause sentences, while the most visible difference is for two-clause and multiple-clause sentences: in *Lessico*, the former are higher and the latter lower than FI.

If synchronically FI shows higher elaboration than other works written in *lingua media*, diachronically it presents a simplification. The trend seen with the length of the sentence seems therefore to repeat itself here. Indeed, the comparison with RP shows a decisive simplification in terms of number of clauses per sentence:

Table 5-7 – Composition: Comparison RP, FI

| | RP | FI diegesis |
|---|--------|-------------|
| Average no. of clauses per sentence | 6.73 | 3.43 |
| % of single-clause sentences | 22.76% | 31.25% |
| % of two-clause sentences | 16.26% | 19.32% |
| % of three-clause sentences | 10.57% | 11.93% |
| % of sentences with more than 3 clauses | 50.41% | 37.5% |

FI opts for a clear reduction in multiple-clause sentences (minus 12.9%), and an increase in single-clause sentences (plus 8.5%), resulting in an average number of clauses per sentence that is almost halved from RP. In other words, FI gets closer to the average number of clauses of narrative texts (3 clauses per sentence) than the previous work RP.²⁵ FI is nearer to the average of PV in this case, arguably because of the presence of similar styles in these two works (reportage, monologue), whereas RP is more calibrated on the long measure. In

²⁵ Polcarpi, Rombi, 'Tendenze nella sintassi dell'italiano contemporaneo', p. 144.

all of the three works single-clause and multiple-clause sentences have the highest percentages, indicating Arbasino's preference for contrasts between long and short measures.

The distribution roughly corresponds to that seen in the section on the length of the sentence, since in many cases single and two-clause sentences correspond to short and medium sentences, and three-clause and multiple-clause sentences to medium-long, long and very long sentences. Therefore, most of the single and two-clause sentences are concentrated in reportage. Single-clause sentences often correspond to a broken sentence, with an effect of focalization:

- (7) Si secca un po', e s'ingozza, quando provano in due o tre a vestirla da Luigi XII, con un po' di scialli e un cimiero, per proseguire la Maria di Rohan trasformandola in musical. **Ma Desideria li caccia via.** (p. 770)

Breaking the sentence is also a way to add dynamism and simplify syntactic links. In some cases, broken sentences bridge between direct discourse and free indirect speech:

- (8) Di parecchi, che le vediamo insieme, lei giura di non sapere chi sono, di non ricordare né i nomi né le facce. E chi sarà il Duca? 'Di Badminton? Di Tattersall?' chiede Renato a Giulio. 'Comunque è uno dei proprietari terrieri più ricchi della nazione' gli risponde. 'Vive nella Nightmare Abbey, che ha ottocento stanze, o forse ottomila.' **E le sta dietro in tassi, testardamente, senza parlare. Ma lei fa come con tutti.** (pp. 1067-68).

The fact that the two sentences in bold start with a conjunction after direct speech implies that the character's discourse is continuing in narration, in the form of free indirect speech. Actually, the entire passage is characterized by the continuous shift between direct speech and free indirect (or maybe free direct) speech.²⁶ We can see that in the sequence 'E chi sarà il Duca? "Di Badminton? Di Tattersall?"', where the first question does not present inverted commas and the following two instead have inverted commas, although they would be all part of the same utterance. Arbasino deliberately blurs the borders between the mimetic and diegetic levels and confuses voices: he rejects traditional representation of spoken discourse and at the same time enacts a polyphonic

²⁶ The identity of the person uttering the words without inverted commas is unknown; it can be one of the characters or the narrator.

representation of reality. This happens especially towards the end of the novel, where the chaos of voices parallels the vortex of consumerist goods that catches the protagonists. We can recall that this technique was first tried out in PV, in the short stories *Agosto* and *Blue jeans*.

Similarly, short single-clause sentences can be exclamations or direct questions that fictionally point in the direction of a presentation of the narrator's discourse as a free direct speech, that is, as a continued mimesis of the narrator's language:

(9) L'abito d'oro brilla, e la fa sembrare una donna del '28, con le sue occhiaie e tutto. **Ma che occhiaie, ha!** (p. 770)

(10) Desideria sta lì proprio passando. **Ha sentito?** (p. 774)

On the other hand, in the parts of the narrator's interior monologue there are many multiple-clause sentences that correspond to the long sentences mimicking the flow of the narrator's inner reasoning. Sometimes these are interrupted by single-clause or two-clause sentences, creating a variation in rhythm:

(11) **Sociologia? Bene.** Ma come si fa, dicevo, a puntar tutto su un cavallo solo? e se capita un imprevisto?... Le trame delle docenze... le cabale dell'ordinariato... tutta una letteratura, e per di più fastidiosa... ma la realtà è sempre molto più lenta, provinciale, statale, meschina, squallida: anche perché gli interessi in gioco sono miseri, paragonati alle lotte. (p. 983)

Also in the case of argumentative parts of the text short and single-clause sentences correspond to questions or exclamations in free direct speech, as we saw it happens in the argumentative parts of RP.

Mimesis

In mimesis we find a high average number of clauses per sentence, 3, that almost matches that of diegesis. The datum is produced by the fact that in mimesis multiple-clause sentences, even though they are less than half than the single-clause ones, often have a high number of clauses. This different outline reflects the two configurations of mimesis seen in the section on length, dialogue and monologue: dialogues normally have sentences composed of a low

number of clauses, while monologues have sentences with a high number of clauses. Before seeing examples of both these configurations, let us reflect on synchronic and diachronic comparisons. In diachronic terms, data of FI are very close to those of PV:

Table 5-8 – Composition: Comparison PV, FI

| | PV mimesis | FI mimesis |
|---|------------|------------|
| Average no. of clauses per sentence | 3.01 | 3.07 |
| % of single-clause sentences | 45.58% | 50.78% |
| % of two-clause sentences | 17.01% | 16.41% |
| % of three-clause sentences | 11.22% | 12.89% |
| % of sentences with more than 3 clauses | 26.19% | 19.92% |

The slight increase in single-clause and decrease of multiple-clause sentences in FI can be explained by an intensification of the use of dialogues, mostly composed of sentences with only one clause. As we said in the case study on PV, the average number of clauses clearly exceeds that of real informal spoken conversations, and it is actually higher than that of a formal monologue such as a university lecture (2.7 clauses per sentence).²⁷

By contrast, the comparison with *Lessico* shows that the novel in *lingua media* has an absolute majority of single-clause sentences and no multiple-clause sentences, displaying once more the syntactic distance from FI:

Table 5-9 – Composition: Comparison FI, Lessico mimesis

| | FI mimesis | Lessico mimesis |
|---|------------|-----------------|
| Average no. of clauses per sentence | 3.07 | 1.42 |
| % of single-clause sentences | 50.78% | 64.79% |
| % of two-clause sentences | 16.41% | 28.17% |
| % of three-clause sentences | 12.89% | 7.04% |
| % of sentences with more than 3 clauses | 19.92% | 0 |

²⁷ Voghera, *Sintassi e intonazione nell'italiano parlato*, p. 197.

As we have said before, in dialogues sentences tend to have fewer clauses, and single-clause sentences are the most frequently used. In many instances what limits the composition of the sentence - as was the case for its length - are textual and pragmatic conditions that arise from the interactional nature of dialogues, which is what happens in spoken Italian:²⁸

- (12) All'improvviso mi fa: 'Lo conosci da tanto tempo tu, Renato?'
Rispondo sul pigro: 'Da un po'... così...' (p. 700)

- (13) 'Non mi vorrà dare a intendere che quella bella ragazza lì le viene insieme per niente, Berengardi! Andiamo!'
'Marchesa...'
'Ma andiamo, per esempio, ai vestiti, al vitto, chi provvede? È una che ha del suo?'
'Senta...'
'Chissà che dispiacere, eh, Berengardi, per la sua povera mamma!' (p. 771)

Thus, in example 12 we find a syntactically incomplete sentence, 'Da un po'... così...', which is an elliptical sentence for 'Lo conosco da un po'', because it follows the question 'Lo conosci da tanto tempo [...] in the previous turn. Moreover, it is suspended, and the presence of the filler 'così' indicates that the speaker is not willing to expand more on the circumstances of his acquaintance with Renato. In example 13 again it is clear that the progression of the information allows the exclamation 'Chissà che dispiacere, eh, Berengardi, per la sua povera mamma!' to be limited to one independent clause (nominal), since we can easily infer the subordinate clause that could have followed (e.g. 'sapere che mantiene una bella ragazza'). Conversely, the other interlocutor does not even pronounce a syntactically complete sentence, only a vocative ('Marchesa') and a discourse marker ('Senta') in two different dialogic turns. Despite this, we can understand what he implies in both of them: namely, that he is embarrassed and would like to stop the conversation. All of these are examples of brachylogy, because they shorten the sentence, favouring conciseness and rapidity;

²⁸ 'L'alternanza di turni di parola è l'elemento che più direttamente influenza le strutture linguistiche del parlato, poiché il dialogo è per definizione costituito da porzioni brevi di testo: interruzioni, cambi di progetto, sovrapposizione di turni di parlanti diversi, ecc., sono caratteristiche normali dei dialoghi spontanei', Voghera, 'Lingua parlata'.

brachylogy, as Testa points out, is one of the main features of spoken language.²⁹

In monologues, instead, we find most of the multiple-clause sentences, as happens for monologues in diegetic parts. Some of them occupy the entire conversational turn: these are the cases where the use of suspension points keeps the sentence open to the continued addition of clauses and the results are sentences that can have up to twenty clauses, all linked together in a flow of spoken thoughts. Generally, in real situations too monologues have more clauses than dialogues, as Voghera shows, but not as many as in FI, where therefore there is a clear dimension of artificiality, of going beyond a realistic representation of a spoken monologue.³⁰ In these sentences, the usual syntactic boundaries break: exclamations and direct questions can be absorbed within what, more than a sentence, is a textual portion:

- (14) 'Hai visto, come gli piacciono i suoi mali e le sue tossi... senza contare che siccome lavora adagio vive con la paura che gli altri gli portino via le idee... più svelti!... Da questi qui del 'Broletto' sono sicuro che si sente bruciare il didietro, per esempio... ha dovuto prenderli dentro per fare dei piaceri a un po' di mamme confindustriali potenti, ma gli stanno preparando dietro le spalle dei brutti scherzi e non può non saperlo.'
- (p. 978)

At the end of this first section on length and composition we can already observe some notable elements. On the diegetic level, FI shows a tendency to go beyond the standard of contemporary Italian and of contemporary narrative works both in terms of number of words and number of clauses. The comparison with data from works in *lingua media* and from works exceeding the limits of the average prose allows us to place FI among the latter. However, the comparison with the previous work RP reveals a reduction in length and elaboration in FI, due to the choice of a reportage style for the narrative parts of the text, which is mostly composed of short and medium sentences. We have noted how much these parts owe to the polyphonic reportage of some short stories in PV, but also the presence of parodic elements, which were not there in the first work, carried in particular by lists. The argumentative text is instead composed of long

²⁹ Enrico Testa, *Simulazione di parlato: fenomeni dell'oralità nelle novelle del Quattro-Cinquecento* (Florence: Accademia della Crusca, 1991), p. 175.

³⁰ Voghera, *Sintassi e intonazione nell'italiano parlato*, pp. 190-96 (table p. 192).

monologues, more similar in terms of length and composition to those of RP, although here there is a clearer intention to impress on them a spoken stamp using suspension points and structures typical of spoken language.

The mimetic level also moves away from spoken language in real situations, especially in the case of monologues, which appear longer and richer in clauses than the standard in real informal and private situations. As in the case of diegesis, FI mimesis gets closer to works that go beyond *lingua media*. The diachronic comparison shows the closeness of FI to PV, yet the qualitative analysis clarifies that FI makes larger use of dialogues. Dialogues in FI seem to follow closely the configuration of real dialogues, and reveal a more verisimilar recreation of spoken language in syntactic terms compared to the quotations used in PV and to the lengthy monologues appearing within FI itself. Monologues in mimesis look very similar to those in diegesis, to the extent that they can be considered as part of an uninterrupted discourse.

Let us now proceed in the investigation of the syntax by looking at coordinating and subordinating links.

5.2 Syntactic Links inside the Sentence: Coordination and Subordination

In this section, we will explore coordination and subordination in FI. We are now at the heart of the investigation of the syntax of the sentence, where we will discover how Arbasino decides to articulate sentences with more than one clause. Let us first of all present some data that can help us visualize differences and similarities at different levels. The following is a table with data concerning the frequency of paratactic, hypotactic and single-clause sentences in diegetic and mimetic parts of our work:

Table 5-10 – Syntactic links FI

| | FI diegesis | FI mimesis |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| % of paratactic sentences | 11.93% | 11.33% |
| % of hypotactic sentences | 58.52% | 39.45% |
| % of single-clause sentences | 29.55% | 49.22% |

First of all, we should acknowledge the difference between diegesis and mimesis in terms of percentages of sentences that actually have a link within them, therefore that are either paratactic or hypotactic: in diegesis their combined weight is 70.4%, in mimesis 50.7%. This means that whatever the result of our analysis will be, we should bear in mind that for mimesis we are talking about just half of the sentences found in there, and that the other half (49.2%) is composed of single-clause sentences, which underlines the higher simplicity of this level. Having said that, we can see that in both levels the percentage of paratactic sentences is similar and quite low, while hypotactic sentences dominate in the diegetic level and are of a considerable percentage in the mimetic level.

Talking more specifically about the diegetic level, we can see in the table below the comparison with the previous work RP:

Table 5-11 – Syntactic links: Comparison RP, FI

| | RP | FI diegesis |
|------------------------------|--------|----------------|
| % of paratactic sentences | 5.69% | 11.93% |
| % of hypotactic sentences | 73.17% | 58.52% |
| % of single-clause sentences | 21.14% | 29.55% |

Diachronically, it seems that a significant simplification has been put into place by Arbasino in FI, because hypotactic sentences are evidently less frequent, while paratactic and single-clause sentences are more frequent than in RP. On the other hand, though, when we compare the diegetic level of FI with that of *Lessico familiare*, therefore a work that we expect, also from what we have seen in the previous section, to be simpler, we discover that the percentages are very similar:

Table 5-12 – Syntactic links: Comparison FI, Lessico diegesis

| | FI diegesis | Lessico diegesis |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| % of paratactic sentences | 11.93% | 9.84% |
| % of hypotactic sentences | 58.52% | 60.66% |
| % of single-clause sentences | 29.55% | 29.51% |

Likewise, Mauroni tells us that in the works of one of the most syntactically simple writers, Morselli, there are percentages of paratactic sentences that range between 5% and 14% and percentages of hypotactic sentence that range between 46% and 60%, therefore again very similar to FI.³¹ These similarities, rather than contradict what we have stated in the previous section, namely that there is a syntactic difference between FI and works in *lingua media*, warn us to be careful when drawing conclusions just from these data, since hypotaxis does not straightforwardly correspond to complexity (depth of the sentence) and elaboration (number of clauses, in particular subordinates). A hypotactic sentence can be composed of just one independent clause and one subordinate clause, and be therefore quite simple, or be composed for example of two independent clauses and six subordinate clauses, with various degrees of embedding, and therefore be more complex. We will see in the following subsections how FI diegesis differs from works in *lingua media*.

As far as mimesis is concerned, the comparison with the mimetic level of PV shows that the percentages of paratactic, hypotactic and single-clause sentences are very close:

Table 5-13 – Syntactic links: Comparison PV, FI

| | PV mimesis | FI mimesis |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|
| % of paratactic sentences | 9.18% | 11.33% |
| % of hypotactic sentences | 45.92% | 39.45% |
| % of single-clause sentences | 44.9% | 49.22% |

FI appears slightly simpler with higher percentages of paratactic and single-clause sentences, possibly determined by the presence of dialogues, which tend to have shorter sentences with simpler links than the quotations of PV.

If we compare our data with those from the mimetic parts of *Lessico*, we can see instead a significant difference between the two:

³¹ Mauroni, 'La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei', p. 229.

Table 5-14 – Syntactic links: Comparison FI, Lessico mimesis

| | FI mimesis | Lessico mimesis |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| % of paratactic sentences | 11.33% | 5.63% |
| % of hypotactic sentences | 39.45% | 29.58% |
| % of single-clause sentences | 49.22% | 64.79% |

In *Lessico* 64.8% of the sentences are composed of one clause (mostly exclamations), while the percentages of paratactic and hypotactic sentences drop in comparison with FI: the use of long and articulated sentences in the monologic parts of FI mimesis probably determines this difference. As we have said before, however, the degree of complexity and elaboration of paratactic and hypotactic sentences needs to be analysed more in depth. Finally, we can observe by cross-referencing data of table 5-12 and table 5-14, that the gap between *Lessico* diegesis and *Lessico* mimesis is higher than the gap between FI diegesis and FI mimesis: narrator's discourse and characters' discourse come closer in Arbasino's work than in the work in *lingua media*. The closeness between the two levels has emerged already in the section on length and composition, and reflects Arbasino's tendency to recreate in FI a homogeneous and undifferentiated discourse, which bears comparison with those used by other experimental writers of the time (Sanguineti, Mastronardi, Berto, etc.).³²

5.2.1 Syndetic and Asyndetic Coordination

We will explore in this section syndetic and asyndetic coordination, both in paratactic and in hypotactic sentences.

Diegesis

As we have seen (table 5-11), parataxis increases in FI diegesis from RP. The narrative text, in reportage style, is the part of the corpus where we can find most of the paratactic sentences: parataxis, with its linearity and simplicity, is functional to convey the sense of immediacy and fast movement required by this style. We witnessed earlier a similar increase also in the short stories of PV that featured a reportage style, *Blue jeans* and *Agosto*. Paratactic sentences are

³² Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', pp. 689-90.

mostly short or medium in length and either describe a situation, a person, or follow the development of an action:

(15) Lo sostiene lei: ha il suo pacchettino sempre dietro, pieno di **ditini**, forse di bambini, se li farà dare da qualche clinica; e li sgranocchia in metropolitana. (p. 1067)

(16) Li prendono fra due dita, li osservano un momentino, poi giù un **morsino**, e subito un'altra guardatina. (p. 1067)

In these examples coordination is performed through asyndeta, apart from the last clause, coordinated to the previous one through both asyndeton and the conjunction *e*, therefore using a reinforced coordination that has the effect of rhythmically separating the last clause from the others. Elements that contribute to linearization are, in example 15, the replacement of subordination (relative *che*) with asyndeton and direct object pronoun 'li': 'pieno di ditini, forse di bambini, che si farà dare da qualche clinica' > 'pieno di ditini, forse di bambini, se li farà dare da qualche clinica'. In example 16 we find nominal style fostering linearity and rapidity ('poi giù un morsino').

However, here parataxis seems to be used also to highlight parodic elements. The impression is that the simple and linear structure of these sentences allows the parodic reification of linguistic clichés to stand out. Indeed, the diminutives that recur ('pacchettino-ditini' and 'momentino-morsino-guardatina') point to worn-out tics present in the spoken language of *media borghesia*, in particular the term *momentino*, disliked by linguistic purists but widespread in common usage. Diminutives are not only quoted but also put together, creating rhymes and phonic games and revealing in this way Arbasino's playful aim.³³ Other evidences of the combination parataxis-parodic deformation will appear later when talking about maximally paratactic structures such as lists.

Let us consider how longer hypotactic sentences are articulated in the on-the-spot report. Some of these long sentences can reach high degrees of embedding; yet, despite these complex highpoints, overall their construction relies on coordination:

³³ A similar use of diminutives is observed in *La bella di Lodi* (1972 edition) by Della Corte, *Come ombre vivaci sullo sfondo*, pp. 151-2.

(17) Questi però frullando stanno **già domandandosi tutti insieme a voce altissima** se è vero o no che Raimondo sta per morire; **l'hanno appena sentito dire; e nello stesso momento** la Canobbiana smette di beccare nel piatto, **si volta indietro**, gridando forte per chiamare Antonio **appena appena** comparso da solo, **e anche lei gli domanda subito** se Raimondo lo sa o no d'avere il cancro. (p. 774)

This sentence reaches the third degree of subordination, yet it is structured on a series of coordinated blocks composed of independent clauses (in bold) +subordinates, which maintain linearity despite the elaborate and long structure. The structure is not new in Arbasino, as we saw examples of it in the long sentences of PV and in the narrative text of RP. However, this time the overall effect is much more dynamic and rapid than in the previous works, more suitable for the reportage style (we noted it already in example 2). This effect is achieved through high use of verbs denoting actions and adverbs conveying a sense of contemporaneity and rapidity ('già', 'appena', 'nello stesso momento', 'subito'). These types of sentence fall within what Antonelli calls 'dynamic' parataxis, a very common structure in narrative writing from 1960s onwards, defined as:

Brevi frasi rette (di solito aperte) da un verbo di modo finito si susseguono separate dal punto (meno spesso dalla virgola o dal punto e virgola), concentrando nello spazio della pagina e nel tempo della lettura una fitta sequenza di azioni, col risultato di accelerare il ritmo della narrazione [...] o, al contrario, di rallentarla.³⁴

Antonelli talks about 'brevi frasi', which therefore we take as the most common manifestation of dynamic parataxis. The fact that in FI we find this structure in long sentences instead, reveals once again that Arbasino moves away from the standard in narrative writing as far as length is concerned; although at the level of connections between clauses he substantially adheres to the type of linearization and simplification described by Antonelli.

In this section we must also consider lists, which are examples of parataxis brought to extremes. Lists are paratactic and loose structures, where nouns or clauses add one to the other through asyndeta or conjunctions. Hierarchies are cancelled, that is, there are no subordinating links, so much so that an 'item' can be taken away or moved around without disruptions. Basically, lists simplify

³⁴ Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', p. 694.

the structure of the sentence but also perform potentially infinite additions of items, as we can see in this example:

(18) Su e giù, scalette interne, stucchi tarlati, velluti lisi, dorature vittoriane; e le vecchine gobbe in vestaglia nera, col loro colletto di pizzo sporco, e i vassoietti di legno per terra, col tè e i due biscotti secchi nel piattino. E le spettatrici delle matinées, anziane, spettinate, miti, con gli occhi celesti acquosi, gli occhiali, i soprabiti bianchi sformati con le spalle quadrate, le berrette di velluto viola o di maglia beige; e abitano lontano, piegano l'impermeabile, bevono nell'intervallo, e si passano i fondants economici comprati in metropolitana, le caramelle mou ricoperte di cioccolato al latte, col suo strato di paglietta sotto per sembrare di più.
(p. 1068)

To produce lists like this, Arbasino first lightens the sentence by reducing its components to a nominal clause, a noun or just a verbal predicate (e.g. 'andiamo su e giù' > 'su e giù'), deleting any subordinating links and coordinating them one to the other. Then he accumulates these nouns or verbal predicates through asyndeta or conjunctions, and he even expands them internally, creating chaotic and rapid accumulations of objects, people, actions, etc. This syntactic process can be described as 'simplifying in order to accumulate', because it aims at creating agile and paratactic structures that can be endlessly repeated; it is highly visible in lists, but is also present in other types of structures, as for example the 'dynamic' parataxis seen above.³⁵ In example 18 the impression of fast accumulation of items is further fostered by the repetition of the conjunction *e* (cumulative *e*), which keeps the list cohesive even when a full stop occurs. As noted, parataxis emphasizes the use of linguistic tics ('vecchine' 'collettino' 'piattino', 'col suo' / 'col loro'), and the use of phonic games, rhythmic sequences that, rapidly accumulated, trigger a parodic, grotesque reading of the characters described.

Long and paratactic constructions can be found in the argumentative text of diegesis, composed of the narrator's internal monologue. As we have seen in the previous section, here there are a high number of long sentences; generally, there are also a higher number of subordinates and degree of subordination, as

³⁵ Lucchelli notices exactly this same procedure in the passage from the typescript of FI to the first edition, as she affirms: 'prima di poter agire su una prosa con aggiunte e infarciture, producendo il sempre citato "millefoglie", Arbasino si è dovuto creare dei presupposti sintattici, vale a dire un'intelaiatura sintattica solida e al tempo stesso flessibile, cioè pronta ad aprirsi in più punti, senza soccombere sotto il suo stesso peso'. Lucchelli, 'Sull'elaborazione strutturale e stilistica dell'edizione '63', p. 32.

was also observed in the argumentative parts of RP. Yet, the nature of internal links seems here to be maintained simpler than in RP. Many of these sentences are composed of a series of nominal appositions, coordinated one to the other, thus keeping the degree of complexity low, as in the following example, which has a third degree of subordination (appositions in italics):

- (19) Come riesce doloroso, quindi, il distacco dalle Biblioteche di Facoltà dopo averle sfruttate per quel poco che hanno da dare, quando diventa inevitabile fare i conti con le due costanti caratteristiche della Lombardia, *la lucidità illuministica un po' delirante ma senza paura di abbandoni romantici, e le più sfrenate curiosità miscellanee per la buona letteratura e il teatro, le scienze sociali e la musica, le belle arti e le istituzioni politiche... sempre i medesimi interessi europei eclettici di una società piuttosto calma e una civiltà piuttosto vecchia, ma con gli occhi aperti, vitalissime e non scettiche, mai indifferenti... senza troppe illusioni... cariche di speranze e di fedi...* (p. 982)

This type of parataxis coincides with what Antonelli calls 'static' parataxis, namely a type of cumulative sentence that is mainly built on series of nominal appositions - hence their static nature - coordinated one to the other.³⁶ The 'stasis' this type of parataxis communicates goes hand in hand with the reflective tone of these parts of the text, but also points to a typical syntactic structure of experimental writers, from Gadda's *gliuommeri* to Sanguineti's *labirinti*, Consolo's *chioccioline* and Manganelli's nominal expansions.³⁷

Mimesis

In the dialogic parts of the mimetic level short, single-clause sentences dominate. When sentences are a little more articulated, they are paratactic or hypotactic with a limited number of subordinates; often the subordinating links are cancelled in order to further linearize the sentence:

- (20) 'Suo padre non deve avergliene più dati da quando canta. Vuole che vada in fabbrica. E ha ragione, naturalmente: figlio unico!' (p. 701)
- (21) '**Per forza...**è il caso di dire: non si vede che quello in scena...' (p. 699)

³⁶ Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', p. 691.

³⁷ Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana', p. 691; Bricchi, *Notizie su Hilarotragoedia*, pp. 47-50.

In the last sentence of example 20, the connection between the first clause ‘Ha ragione’ and the second nominal and exclamative clause ‘figlio unico!’ is causal, meaning ‘his father is right in asking him to work in the factory since he is the only child’. Yet, the subordinating link is obliterated by the use of the colon. Equally, the second example presents the cancellation of the subordinating link, this time the conjunction *che*, again replaced by a colon: ‘è il caso di dire che non si vede’ > ‘è il caso di dire: non si vede’. Syntactic linearity combines with typical features of spoken language, that make the recreation of orality more realistic: discourse marker *e* at the beginning of the turn, an exclamation, an interrupted clause (‘Per forza...’) and suspension points that mimic a suspensive tone at the end of the sentence.

Monologues in mimetic parts instead present instances of ‘static’ parataxis:

- (22) ‘[...] Però, prenderlo sul serio oggi, mi pare un’idea un po’ bizzarra... *così rotocalchesco, buttato solo sulle ultimissime mode... disponibile per ogni dernier cri... e intanto rimasto così vecchio come gusto... attaccato ai tempi* quando si poteva ancora épater le Bourgeois Gentilhomme a colpi di visone e di viole da gamba... *l’illustrativo, il decorativo, il tableau vivant... cioè proprio il non-teatro... la parola sottomessa all’addobbo, le idee umiliate dal frou-frou...* col risultato poi che gli zecchini d’oro vero sulla scena sembreranno soldoni di cioccolata, perché il suo ‘più vero del vero’ è falsissimo [...]’ (p. 699)

The sentence is a blend of verbal and nominal structures. As in the case of the monologues in diegesis, appositions expand the sentence but do not add depth to it, since they are coordinated one to the other and mostly nominal. There are some embedded subordinates only in the final part, which is verbal. The affinity with the argumentative parts of the diegetic level is once more highlighted.

5.2.2 Subordination

The analysis of coordination has shown that sentences in FI tend to be structured in a paratactic way; even in some respects longer, hypotactic sentences. Let us concentrate now on the subordinating links found in hypotactic sentences, which as we have noticed in table 5-10 form 58.5% of the total of sentences in diegesis and 39.4% in mimesis. We will verify how complex these sentences are, by investigating the degree of subordination, the distribution and the type of subordinate clauses.

5.2.2.1 Degree of Subordination

The table below shows data concerning the degree of subordination in diegesis and mimesis:

Table 5-15 – Degree of subordination FI

| | FI diegesis | FI mimesis |
|--|-------------|------------|
| Max degree of subordination | 6 | 6 |
| Average degree of subordination | 1.67 | 1.64 |
| % of hypotactic sentences with 1 st degree of subordination | 57.43% | 59.18% |
| % with 2 nd degree | 24.75% | 26.53% |
| % with 3 rd degree | 13.86% | 10.2% |
| % with 4 th degree | 1.98% | 1.02% |
| % with 5 th degree | 0.99% | 1.02% |
| % with 6 th degree | 0.99% | 2.04% |

The first element that we note is that diegesis and mimesis have very similar data. For both levels the maximum degree of subordination is quite high, 6, but the average degree of subordination is under 1.7, meaning that sentences with low degrees of subordination clearly prevail. Indeed, more than 80% of hypotactic sentences in diegesis and mimesis have a first or a second degree of subordination. These data basically endorse the substantial linearity and simplicity of the sentence of FI argued above when talking about coordination: sentences tend to expand horizontally rather than vertically. As a further confirmation of non-complexity, the average degree of subordination of both diegesis and mimesis falls within the average of contemporary Italian.

Higher degrees of subordination see slightly different percentages in diegesis and mimesis, but what is remarkable is that we can still find in mimesis a considerable percentage of sentences with a third degree of subordination and some cases of sentences reaching fourth, fifth and even sixth degree. This is because of the monologues, where most of the hypotactic sentences with a high degree of subordination concentrate. Equally, in diegesis the higher degrees of subordination are found in the narrator's monologues: monologues in diegesis and those in mimesis already shared a similar coordinating architecture ('static'

syntax) and a similar degree of complexity can further confirm that the two are quite close in syntactic terms. Let us now explore more in depth the degree of subordination of diegesis and mimesis separately.

Diegesis

At the beginning of this section on the internal links inside the sentence, we have observed that data concerning paratactic, hypotactic and single-clause sentences in FI and *Lessico familiare* substantially coincided; as table 5-12 reports, hypotactic sentences in FI are 58.5%, in *Lessico* 60.6%. It is time now to examine more carefully these sentences and compare the levels of embedding in these two works:

Table 5-16 – Degree of subordination: Comparison FI, Lessico diegesis

| | FI diegesis | Lessico diegesis |
|--|-------------|------------------|
| Max degree of subordination | 6 | 3 |
| Average degree of subordination | 1.67 | 1.32 |
| % of hypotactic sentences with 1 st degree of subordination | 57.43% | 72.97% |
| % with 2 nd degree | 24.75% | 21.62% |
| % with 3 rd degree | 13.86% | 5.41% |
| % with 4 th degree | 1.98% | 0% |
| % with 5 th degree | 0.99% | 0% |
| % with 6 th degree | 0.99% | 0% |

Even though the two works have the same percentage of hypotactic sentences, the table shows that *Lessico* has a less complex subordination than FI: the percentage of sentences with a first degree of subordination is higher than that of FI, and the level of embedding does not go beyond the third level. The simplification is testified by the average degree of subordination, 1.3 for *Lessico* against 1.6 in FI.

Similarly, the authors analysed by Mauroni confirm that in terms of degree of subordination FI gets closer to authors that move away from *lingua media*. More specifically, it is Volponi who shows the closest data: the diegetic parts of his works present high percentages (we do not have more precise data) for the first

and second degree of subordination, 10% for the third degree, 3-4% for the fourth degree and then lower percentages for the following degrees (Volponi's works can arrive up to the eighth degree of subordination).³⁸ If we widen the comparison to non-literary prose, according to the data gathered by Lepschy and Raponi FI appears closer to essayistic prose: Eco's essay has 64.2% of subordinate clauses with first degree of subordination, 25% with second degree, 7.1% with third degree and 3.5% with fourth degree, but does not go further.³⁹ In other words, although remaining within the limits of contemporary Italian in terms of depth of the sentence, FI shows a slightly higher complexity than the average literary prose, closer to that of works going beyond *lingua media*.

On the other hand, Arbasino decreases the degree of complexity when compared to the previous work, RP, as the following table shows:

Table 5-17 – Degree of subordination: Comparison RP, FI

| | RP | FI diegesis |
|--|--------|----------------|
| Max degree of subordination | 6 | 6 |
| Average degree of subordination | 1.97 | 1.67 |
| % of hypotactic sentences with 1 st degree of subordination | 47.19% | 57.43% |
| % with 2 nd degree | 23.6% | 24.75% |
| % with 3 rd degree | 19.1% | 13.86% |
| % with 4 th degree | 6.74% | 1.98% |
| % with 5 th degree | 2.25% | 0.99% |
| % with 6 th degree | 1.12% | 0.99% |

Sentences with first and second degree of subordination have higher percentages in FI, while sentences with third, fourth, fifth and sixth degree have higher percentages in RP. The average degree of subordination is indeed higher in RP, confirming a slightly higher complexity. In this case, therefore, the datum is in line with the percentages of hypotactic, paratactic and single-clause sentences in FI and RP seen in table 5-11 above. However, we must underline that also RP

³⁸ Mauroni, 'La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei', p. 264.

³⁹ Lepschy, Raponi, 'Il movimento della norma nell'italiano contemporaneo', p. 14. I have recalculated percentages excluding sentences with a 0 degree of subordination (thus, non-hypotactic sentences).

fell within the range of the average degree of subordination of contemporary Italian. For both works, therefore, the transgression lies above all in the length of the sentence rather than in its depth.

Let us now see some examples. We have already seen how in the on-the-spot report hypotactic sentences tend to be structured in clusters of independents+subordinates coordinated one to the other, thus keeping the degree of subordination low. I would like to present other techniques used by Arbasino to avoid weighing the sentence down with subordinating links and to give an impression of fluidity and spoken nonchalance to sentences with high degrees of embedding. For example:

- (23) La massa dei giornali viene freneticamente divorata in letto, prima di tutto, o dentro la vasca da bagno, gonfia di schiuma, fra continue telefonate (che ci fanno aspettare...) di 'hai visto questo?', e di 'a che ora andiamo fuori?' da una stanza all'altra; e dopo un po' il pavimento è coperto di quotidiani squarciati, come più tardi nel pomeriggio si riempie di carte gialle e marrone di pacchetti, e crepitano duramente e traboccano dai cesti già pieni di sacchetti da grandi magazzini, di nastri rossi, di buste di cellophan buttate via perché sono quelle che fanno soffocare a infilarci dentro la testa e si muore. (p. 1062)

The sentence counts eleven clauses (direct speech is not included), two of which independents and nine subordinates, with a fifth degree of subordination. The first independent clause 'La massa dei giornali viene divorata' is quite long, expanded by appositions and parenthetical clauses, but with just a non-restrictive relative clause in brackets ('che ci fanno aspettare'). The second independent 'e dopo un po' il pavimento è coperto' carries instead three comparative clauses coordinated one to the other: 'come più tardi si riempie [...] e crepitano [...] e traboccano'. If we observe more closely, though, the last two comparatives are in fact relative clauses depending on the noun phrase 'carte gialle e marrone' contained in the first comparative: 'si riempie di carte gialle e marrone di pacchetti, che crepitano duramente e che traboccano dai cesti'. Arbasino instead turns them into two coordinated clauses, by replacing subordinating *che* with the coordinating conjunction *e*: 'si riempie di carte gialle e marrone di pacchetti, e crepitano duramente e traboccano dai cesti'. Thus, the level of embedding in the resulting sentence is reduced by one. At the same time, an impression of accumulating clauses is fostered, which echoes the

growing accumulation of waste portrayed on the semantic level ('il pavimento è coperto', 'si riempie' 'traboccano dai cestì già pieni').

The last comparative clause 'e traboccano dai cestì già pieni di sacchetti da grandi magazzini, di nastri rossi, di buste di cellophan' introduces a series of subordinates that reach the fifth level of embedding: 'buttate via [...] e si muore'. Even in this case however the sentence does not appear heavily burdened by subordination, rather the impression is that it proceeds smoothly. The effect is achieved thanks to the use of non-finite subordinates ('buttate' 'a infilarci'), and thanks to the way subordinates are arranged, namely following the order of events (cause, event, consequence): 'buste di cellophan buttate via perché sono quelle che fanno soffocare a infilarci dentro la testa e si muore'. All these are features that Testa and Voghera include into the syntactical features of subordination in spoken language.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the choice of constructions of a low stylistic level also contributes to creating the impression of spoken nonchalance: I am referring to the causative construction 'fanno soffocare' and to the choice of the coordinated clause with impersonal construction 'e si muore' which cancels the deductive-conclusive value of the clause ('e che provocano così la morte/provocando così la morte').⁴¹ To explain better how the same passage could have appeared in a more formal and written register, here is a rewriting:

(24) buste di cellophan che vengono buttate via perché potrebbero portare a soffocamento qualora si infilasse dentro la testa, provocando così la morte.

This style would obviously not fit in the agile and spoken reportage of the narrative text.

Most sentences with a higher degree of subordination appear in monologues. Yet, unlike what occurred in RP, Arbasino here puts into effect some devices that actually give these sentences a spoken character:

⁴⁰ Miriam Voghera, 'Lingua parlata'; Testa, *Simulazione di parlato*, p. 198.

⁴¹ Guglielmi observes in FI 'ritmi e movenze che, per la loro elementarietà, si ritrovano solo nella scrittura dei bambini'. Angelo Guglielmi, 'Il romanzo di Arbasino', *Il Verri*, 7 (1963), 17-25 (p. 19).

(25) Basta vedere com'è tagliato fuori il mondo accademico italiano da ogni possibile sistema di valori su cui si possa impostare se non il prestigio almeno una forma ragionevole di snobismo, in periodi di una certa mobilità o confusione sociale... installarsi in una classe dirigente in formazione saltando magari da un sistema a un altro... dal Quirinale a Portofino al Premio Salsomaggiore... o come in Wodehouse, dove il padre nobile concede di sposare la bella di bassa estrazione solo quando il repellente zio di lei diventa la più ghiotta curiosità chirurgica d'Europa, per le sue eccezionali deformità... (p. 983)

The sentence counts ten clauses: one independent clause ('Basta') and nine subordinate clauses, reaching the sixth degree of subordination; there is therefore a high degree of complexity. However, this is contrasted by some elements. First of all, the sense of fragmentation and looseness of syntactical links that we encounter in the middle of the sentence from the clause 'installarsi in una classe dirigente...' preceded by suspension points. This is an infinitive clause functioning as an apposition to the prepositional phrase 'da ogni possibile sistema di valori'. Yet the distance from it, the presence of suspension points, and the use of a non-finite form of the verb make the syntactic connection less clear and quite loose, with the result that the clause resembles more a fragment, connected more intuitively than syntactically to the previous clauses. The other fragment 'o come in Wodehouse', which is coordinated to the previous appositional infinitive, shares the same issues with it and is, in addition, nominal: 'o (fare) come in Wodehouse'. Moreover, also in this sentence the types of conjunctions used are not particularly refined ('come', 'quando' 'dove') and the order of the subordinate clauses follows the chain of events (see 'dove il padre nobile concede di sposare etc.').

Mimesis

As far as the mimetic level is concerned, the comparison with *Lessico familiare* shows that Ginzburg's novel presents a simpler mimetic level than Arbasino's, thus confirming what we anticipated when comparing percentages of paratactic, hypotactic and single-clause sentences in table 5-14:

Table 5-18 – Degree of subordination: Comparison FI, Lessico mimesis

| | FI mimesis | Lessico mimesis |
|--|------------|-----------------|
| Max degree of subordination | 6 | 2 |
| Average degree of subordination | 1.64 | 1.1 |
| % of hypotactic sentences with 1 st degree of subordination | 59.18% | 90.48% |
| % with 2 nd degree | 26.53% | 9.52% |
| % with 3 rd degree | 10.2% | 0 |
| % with 4 th degree | 1.02% | 0 |
| % with 5 th degree | 1.02% | 0 |
| % with 6 th degree | 2.04% | 0 |

In *Lessico* hypotactic sentences only reach the second level of embedding, with an average degree of subordination just above 1. Indeed the mimetic level in *Lessico* does not include any monologue, and only sometimes it represents two or more characters conversing. Rather, it is mostly composed of a character's affirmations or exclamations, used as examples of a character's way of expressing himself/herself (the 'family sayings' that give the title to the novel):

Diceva: 'Voialtri non sapete stare a tavola! Non siete gente da portare nei loghi!' (Ginzburg, *Lessico familiare*, p. 9)

The comparison with data collected by Voghera on spoken Italian shows that FI is close in terms of percentages of degrees of subordination to a group of texts ('fonetica', 'radio' and 'morfologia') that do not present many differences one from the other and are very close to the total average.⁴² These texts represent public informal and formal dialogues or monologues (a university seminar, a radio programme and a university lecture), and can reach up to the seventh degree of subordination. *Lessico* is instead closer to a text, 'caffé', which represents a private informal conversation and has a much higher percentage of

⁴² The total average presents 62.2% of sentences with a first degree of subordination, 24.4% with a second degree, 8.4% with a third degree, 3.8% with a fourth degree, 0.5% with a fifth degree, 0.2% with a sixth degree, and 0.5% with a seventh degree. Voghera, *Sintassi e intonazione nell'italiano parlato*, p. 216.

sentences with a first degree of subordination compared to the others.⁴³

Compared with Voghera's data, therefore, FI mimesis is of average complexity, whereas *Lessico* is simpler than the average. Obviously, a lot depends on Voghera's choice of the corpus: spoken conversations of Roman educated speakers, many from academic situations, which may have raised the percentages of high degrees of subordination.⁴⁴ However, what is worth noticing is that while in terms of length FI mimesis falls between a university lecture and a conference lecture, thus monologues in formal and public situations (see above section on length), in terms of degree of subordination FI gets closer to more informal situations, those represented in the novel itself. This shows that FI mimesis tends to exceed real spoken situations in terms of length, but not so much in terms of depth of the sentence.

Finally, the comparison with the mimetic level of PV reveals a different outcome than what we might expect:

Table 5-19 – Degree of subordination: Comparison PV, FI

| | PV mimesis | FI mimesis |
|--|------------|------------|
| Max degree of subordination | 5 | 6 |
| Average degree of subordination | 1.4 | 1.64 |
| % of hypotactic sentences with 1 st degree of subordination | 67.16% | 59.18% |
| % with 2 nd degree | 28.36% | 26.53% |
| % with 3 rd degree | 2.99% | 10.2% |
| % with 4 th degree | 0.75% | 1.02% |
| % with 5 th degree | 0.75% | 1.02% |
| % with 6 th degree | 0 | 2.04% |

If when comparing the percentages of hypotactic, paratactic and single-clause sentences we commented on a possible simplification of FI (table 5-13), this table shows us instead that FI is slightly more complex than PV, with lower

⁴³ Caffè has 80% of sentences with a first degree of subordination, 13.3% with a second degree, 5.5% with a third degree, and 1.2% with a fourth degree. Voghera, *Sintassi e intonazione nell'italiano parlato*, p. 216.

⁴⁴ As Berretta points out, the high degree of subordination found by Voghera is possibly caused by the choice of the corpus and by the way in which subordinate clauses have been counted – namely, counting adverbial clauses and infinitive clauses that follow the main clause. Berretta, 'Il parlato italiano contemporaneo', p. 253 fn 3.

percentages of sentences with a first degree of subordination and higher percentages of third, fourth, fifth degrees. FI even reaches the sixth degree, which was not the case in PV. Indeed if on one hand FI has more dialogues than PV, with single-clause sentences or in general a low degree of subordination, FI has also more monologues, which with their long and multiple-clauses sentences are more likely to reach higher degrees of subordination. In PV monologues are confined to the short story *Giorgio*, whereas in FI they are one of the fundamental structures of mimesis.

Let us take a look at an example of monologue. So far we have seen that monologues in mimesis are based on coordination of appositions. I will show now an example of monologue where instead subordination prevails and the level of embedding is deep:

- (26) '[...] ... E via dall'attenzione critica tutto quello che non si riferisce all'analisi verbale del brano... **Come il mio professore di liceo, Don Baruffaldi, che diceva:** "Aprire il Purgatorio, canto XII, verso 85. C'è poesia?"... **Come quei New Critics americani che rifiutano** la storia letteraria en bloc, per vedere qual è il residuo secco che si lascia dietro una qualunque poesia, dopo averla sottratta alla sua matrice culturale... o prelevano un campioncino da ogni libro per giudicarlo, come quando si fa l'analisi del sangue per sapere se si ha la sifilide... **Come Peer Gynt che sfoglia** la sua cipolla per arrivare al cuore...' (p. 979)

The passage, the final part of a sentence of abnormal length that is here not reported in its entirety, counts nineteen clauses, one independent and eighteen subordinate clauses (excluding direct speech), and reaches the sixth degree of subordination. Despite this high degree of subordination, the sentence does not seem particularly complicated or difficult to follow, instead it runs smoothly.

What contributes to this effect? First of all, an expedient widely used since PV: the coordination of subordinates. As we can see, subordination is structured in three 'blocks' opened by three comparative nominal clauses subordinated to the main clause and coordinated one to the other: 'Come il mio professore [...] Come quei New Critics [...] Come Peer Gynt'. This helps split subordinates and keep the degree of subordination relatively low (it could have been higher than sixth degree if we consider that there are eighteen subordinates). In the second block, 'Come quei New Critics Americani [...] se si ha la sifilide', the one containing most of the subordinate clauses, the strategy is repeated. Two

relative clauses ('che rifiutano', 'o (che) prelevano'), subordinated to the comparative clause and coordinated one to the other, further split the block in two 'lower blocks', where each relative clause has a series of clauses subordinated to it.

Another expedient that mitigates complexity is the order of subordinates in each 'block': it is sequential, without subordinates in parenthetical positions.

Moreover, the types of subordinates repeat themselves, for example the sequence comparative+relative+final non-finite clause recurs and makes the sentence symmetrical and easier to 'process': 'Come il mio professore di liceo, Don Baruffaldi, che diceva', 'Come quei New Critics americani che rifiutano [...] per vedere [...] o prelevano [...] per giudicarlo', 'Come Peer Gynt, che sfoglia [...] per arrivare'. Surely, this technique not only simplifies subordination: it is also a way to perform accumulation. Finally, we can notice that the conjunction 'che' is omitted in the relative clause 'o prelevano'; this, together with the use of suspension points, creates an impression of fragmentation and looseness of the syntactic link.⁴⁵ In summary, the sentence has a high degree of embedding, yet coordination of subordinates and repetition of structures reduce the impression of complexity.

5.2.2.2 Distribution of Subordinate Clauses

If we look at the distribution of clauses in hypotactic sentences and at the ratio independent/subordinate clauses in diegesis and mimesis, the generally long but non-complex architecture of hypotactic sentences is confirmed in both levels:

Table 5-20 – Distribution of subordinates FI

| | FI diegesis | FI mimesis |
|---|-------------|------------|
| Average no. of independent clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1.99 | 2.7 |
| Average no. of subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 2.85 | 3.12 |
| Ratio independent/subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1:1.43 | 1:1.15 |

⁴⁵ The omission of the subordinating conjunction 'che' in a relative clause coordinated to another relative introduced by 'che' is grammatically acceptable; yet, in this case, since the two relative clauses are distant, its omission fosters a sense of looseness. Cinque, 'La frase relativa', p. 471.

Diegesis

Diegesis has an average of two independent clauses and two to three subordinate clauses, which makes the average hypotactic sentence composed of four to five clauses. An example is the following:

(27) **Affondata in una bergère al centro dell'altana** chiama Antonio per cognome, con prepotenza, e si fa portar **da bere, lasciandole lì la bottiglia.** (p. 770)

The sentence counts five clauses, two of which independents and three subordinates. Subordinates are distributed between the two independents, the first one carrying one subordinate, the second one two subordinates: the ratio is indeed 1.4 subordinates for each independent. Hypotactic sentences in FI diegesis are obviously not all like this one: they can range from two to sixteen clauses. Still, the number of subordinates remains generally low: 15% of hypotactic sentences have between seven and nine clauses, with three to five subordinate clauses and 8% have between ten and sixteen clauses, with five to eleven subordinate clauses.⁴⁶

We argued that hypotactic sentences in diegesis appear quite long and rich in clauses, but not as much as those in RP, which on average count more than eight clauses:

Table 5-21 – Distribution of subordinates: Comparison RP, FI

| | RP | FI diegesis |
|--|--------|----------------|
| Average no. of independent clauses in hypotactic sentences | 3.5 | 1.99 |
| Average no. of subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 5.21 | 2.85 |
| Ratio independent/subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1:1.49 | 1:1.43 |

This table highlights the reduction in number of clauses from RP to FI, and also a lower ratio in FI: a sign again of a lower degree of elaboration and slightly lower complexity than in RP.

⁴⁶ Calculation based on data not included in the tables above.

The comparison with *Lessico* confirms what affirmed above: namely, that for the diegetic level FI remains more complex and elaborate than a work in *lingua media*:

Table 5-22 – Distribution of subordinates: Comparison FI, Lessico diegesis

| | FI diegesis | Lessico diegesis |
|---|-------------|------------------|
| Average no. of independent clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1.99 | 1.59 |
| Average no. of subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 2.85 | 2.19 |
| Ratio independent/subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1:1.43 | 1:1.37 |

Lessico has an average hypotactic sentence of three to four clauses, with one or two independents and two or three subordinates, whereas for FI the number of clauses is higher. The ratio points at a higher number of subordinates for each independent for FI.

Mimesis

In mimesis, hypotactic sentences have an even higher number of clauses than in diegesis, between five and six clauses, composed of an average of two to three independent clauses and three subordinate clauses (table 5-20). The higher number of clauses is due to the fact that in mimesis hypotactic sentences are mostly concentrated in monologues. However, the ratio independent/subordinate clauses is lower than in diegesis. Indeed, it often happens that in sentences with a high number of clauses, less than half of the clauses are subordinates, as in the following example:

(28) ‘Una quindicina di anni fa qualcuno ha provato a **stargli dietro**; ma ha fatto di tutto **per seminarli per strada**, così si sono stancati, si saranno sentiti traditi’ (p. 978)

The sentence has six clauses, four of which independents and only two subordinates: there is not even one subordinate for each independent. The last clause has a causal value (‘si sono stancati perché si saranno sentiti traditi’), yet it is not transformed into a causal subordinate.

We can observe the difference in terms of number of clauses between FI and *Lessico*:

Table 5-23 – Distribution of subordinates: Comparison FI, *Lessico* mimesis

| | FI mimesis | <i>Lessico</i> mimesis |
|---|------------|------------------------|
| Average no. of independent clauses in hypotactic sentences | 2.7 | 1.05 |
| Average no. of subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 3.12 | 1.14 |
| Ratio independent/subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1:1.15 | 1:1.09 |

Lessico presents sentences of two or three clauses on average, with a ratio of slightly over one subordinate for each independent. Still, the ratio of FI is not much higher than that of Ginzburg's novel, a sign that the sentence in FI is not heavily burdened with subordinates.

Finally, the comparison with the mimetic level of PV:

Table 5-24 – Distribution of subordinates: Comparison PV, FI

| | PV mimesis | FI mimesis |
|---|------------|------------|
| Average no. of independent clauses in hypotactic sentences | 2.81 | 2.7 |
| Average no. of subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 2.3 | 3.12 |
| Ratio independent/subordinate clauses in hypotactic sentences | 1:0.82 | 1:1.15 |

FI mimesis presents the reverse profile: the sentence counts on average more subordinates than independents. In this case there is an increase in both number of clauses and complexity from PV to FI.

5.2.2.3 Types of Subordinate Clauses

We can conclude the analysis of subordination by looking at the type of subordinate clauses and their frequency in the corpus:

Table 5-25 – Types of subordinates FI

| | FI diegesis | FI mimesis |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| Noun clauses (direct + indirect object) | 13.95% | 26.03% |
| Noun clauses (subject) | 1.02% | 4.44% |
| Interrogative | 5.44% | 5.71% |
| RELATIVE CLAUSES | | |
| Restrictive Relative | 28.91% | 26.35% |
| Non-Restrictive Relative | 3.06% | 2.54% |
| ADVERBIAL CLAUSES | | |
| Temporal | 11.22% | 6.67% |
| Final | 10.2% | 8.57% |
| Causal | 4.76% | 4.13% |
| Mode | 4.76% | 2.86% |
| Hypothetical | 2.04% | 1.9% |
| Comparative | 3.74% | 3.17% |
| Concessive | 1.02% | 0.95% |
| Exception | 0.68% | 0 |
| Exclusion | 2.72% | 1.9% |
| ‘Coordinated’ gerund | 5.1% | 0.63% |
| Adversative | 0 | 0.95% |
| Appositional infinitive | 1.36% | 3.17% |

This long, detailed list shows that there is variety in terms of types of clauses, but the preference, in both diegesis and mimesis, is for the use of the most common types: noun and relative clauses prevail, reaching 46.9% of the total in diegesis and 59.4% of the total in mimesis. As far as adverbial clauses are concerned, the most frequent are temporal and final clauses, then causal and comparative clauses. Some differences occur between the two levels when we look at other types of adverbial clauses: in diegesis the so-called ‘coordinated’ gerund is well represented with 5%, mode clauses - again we are talking about gerunds - reach 4.8%; then clauses of exclusion, hypothetical clauses, appositional infinitives, concessive clauses and clauses of exception with percentages that progressively get close to zero.

In mimesis appositional infinitives gain 3.2%: this is because subordinate clauses appear mostly in monologues, where we find ‘static’ parataxis using appositions (nominal or infinitive) to expand the sentence. Then come mode clauses and clauses of exclusion; while hypothetical, concessive and ‘coordinated’ gerund are very scarce. In general, mimesis has a lower percentage of adverbial clauses than diegesis. Still, such variety of adverbial clauses in mimesis is quite impressive: the number of types found in mimesis is the same as in diegesis, a feature which again reflects the presence of argumentative monologue.

Diegesis

Diegesis in this case presents more interesting elements for discussion than mimesis. The prevalence of noun clauses (object, indirect object and subject) and relative clauses falls within the norm for narrative writing, as was the case of PV, RP, and of the works analysed by Mauroni.⁴⁷ Looking at the form of the verb and at the frequency of adverbial clauses can instead be more significant in terms of stylistic choices. The comparison with RP for example shows that the use of temporal clauses has increased greatly, from 5.8% in RP to 11.2% in FI.⁴⁸ I believe with a specific intention: conveying a sense of contemporaneity, of actions overlapping, especially in the on-the-spot report, where most of them can be found. Often the temporal clause is introduced by conjunction *mentre*, as in the following example:

(29) *Mentre* s'arriva su portano dentro una caldaia di salsicce e lenticchie con la Judy dietro che aiuta, seria in faccia e mestolo in mano, e dopo un minuto la Canobbiana *servita* per prima soffia con forza sopra le sue lenticchie con una salsiccia intera in bocca, *esclamando* in milanese tra ogni soffiata e l'altra “che bontà! che bontà! che bontà!”. (pp. 769-70)

This is part of a passage already discussed in the section on length for its series of actions that happen at the same time or in quick succession in a long - but agile and paratactic - sentence. We can now add that subordinate clauses contribute to this dynamic and cinematographic effect: the temporal clause introduced by ‘mentre’, but also the ‘quick’ past participle ‘servita’ (instead of

⁴⁷ Mauroni, ‘La sintassi del periodo in quattro autori contemporanei’, pp. 238, 243, 248, 254.

⁴⁸ See table 4-16 in the case study on RP.

a relative clause ‘che è servita’) and the ‘coordinated’ gerund ‘esclamando’ foster a feeling of rapidity and contemporaneity.⁴⁹

From the example above we can see that the use of non-finite subordinate clauses, especially participial and gerundive clauses, represents one of the pillars on which the on-the-spot report and cinematographic effect is built, together with dynamic parataxis and nominal style. Indeed in FI we find a high presence of subordinate clauses with non-finite forms of the verb, higher than in RP, as this table shows:⁵⁰

Table 5-26 – Non-finite clauses: Comparison RP, FI

| | RP | FI diegesis |
|---|--------|----------------|
| Non-finite restrictive relative clauses as % of the total of restrictive relative clauses | 18.87% | 33.3% |
| Non-finite noun clauses (direct + indirect object) as % of the total of noun clauses | 50.62% | 64.1% |
| Non-finite temporal clauses as % of the total of temporal clauses | 33.33% | 75.7% |
| Non-finite final clauses as % of the total of final clauses | 95.83% | 96.6% |

Apart from non-finite final clauses, which are used by Arbasino from the beginning of his writing career, all of the other non-finite clauses have higher percentages in FI.⁵¹ If to these we add ‘coordinated’ gerund and mode clauses, which are 100% with a non-finite form of the verb (gerund), we can appreciate how extended is the use of non-finite subordinate clauses in FI diegesis. The preference for non-finite clauses falls within the general quest for agile, quick, linear and nominal syntactic structures that lighten the sentence but also allow

⁴⁹ ‘Coordinated’ gerund is a subordinate clause with gerund that could be paraphrased with a coordinate clause. Its function is of ‘narrative addition’ or ‘comment’ to the main clause and it expresses either contemporaneity or a subsequent action with regards to the main predication. Lidia Lonzi, ‘Frase subordinate al gerundio’, GGIC, II, 571-592 (pp. 588-592) and Verner Egerland, ‘Gerundio’, in *Enciclopedia dell’italiano* (2010), <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gerundio_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/> accessed 15 January 2015.

⁵⁰ The percentages are calculated on the total number of restrictive relative, noun, temporal and final clauses respectively in each work.

⁵¹ See the case study on PV for the use of non-finite final clauses.

its infinite expansion (the 'simplifying in order to accumulate' technique already mentioned). For this reason, they are very widespread in lists:

- (30) [...] e abitano lontano, piegano l'impermeabile, bevono nell'intervallo, e si passano i fondants economici **comprati in metropolitana**, le caramelle mou **ricoperte di cioccolato al latte**, col suo strato di paglietta sotto per sembrare di più. (p. 1068)

Combining with the wide use of non-finite clauses is the lack of variety of subordinating conjunctions, which appear in their most common variants: for example, causal clauses are introduced by *perché* (only one clause is introduced by *dato che*) and concessive by *anche se*; in RP instead we find more variety, with examples of *purché*, *nonostante che*, *finché*. Moreover, there are cases in FI where the subordinating conjunction is omitted, favouring linearity. The typology of clauses in diegesis, therefore, shows that Arbasino does not make stylistically high or particularly 'written' choices and that he is actually simplifying the range of conjunctions compared with that in RP. However, as in the previous works, instances of *che polivalente* are rare in diegesis and we do not find any example in the corpus: this is a sign that the narrator's language is not dropped to lower registers and maintains grammatical correctness.

Mimesis

As far as mimesis is concerned, comparison with the types of subordinates in PV shows that appositional infinitives only appear in FI, underlining how 'static' syntax was not used yet in PV.⁵² On the other hand, the two works share a very similar percentage of adverbial clauses, which represent a third of all of the subordinates in both PV and FI. The types of conjunction used in FI are again among the most common ones: *che*, *quando*, *perché*, *come*; yet, in the parts of argumentative text we can find instances of temporal and concessive conjunctions such as *finché*, *purché*, *per quanto* (one instance each). As in diegesis, there are examples of cancellation of the subordinate conjunction and thus of avoidance of subordinating link. However, in mimesis it is easier to find examples of *che polivalente* than in diegesis, indeed because it is a typical mark of orality, and in particular of informal conversation. In the corpus we find the

⁵² See table 3-16 in the case study on PV and table 5-25 in this case study.

following examples: ‘per quella decina d’anni che è andato benissimo’; ‘su, su, che me ne hanno già parlato!’; ‘Questo incidente che dicevo, dev’essere stato sulla Milano-Laghi’.

In conclusion to the exploration of the nature of syntactic links in FI, we can reaffirm and substantiate with new evidence what we discovered by analysing the length and composition of the sentence: namely, that the syntax of FI can be elaborate but this type of elaboration is mostly a matter of horizontal extension.

On the diegetic level, paratactic structures seem to dominate even in long, hypotactic sentences, both in the form of a ‘dynamic’ parataxis in reportage, and of a ‘static’ parataxis in the monologues. In the cases of sentences with high number of subordinates and levels of embedding, Arbasino uses devices that tend to somewhat counterbalance hypotaxis: sequential order of subordinate clauses, use of common subordinating conjunctions, omission or replacement of subordinating conjunctions with coordinating ones, use of non-finite clauses. Moreover, in some cases the looseness of the syntactic links plays an important part in making the sentence seem less hypotactic and with a spoken flavour.

The comparison with contemporary Italian and other contemporary narrative works has underlined that FI diegesis does not exceed the average degree of subordination of the sentence in standard Italian but is slightly more complex than works in *lingua media*. The comparison with the previous work RP has shown a simplification in FI in terms of depth of the sentence, distribution and types of subordinate clauses (more non-finite clauses). This is mostly linked with the (re)introduction in FI of a reportage style that uses parataxis and nominal style in order to convey rapidity and a sense of immediacy to the text. This had already happened in some short stories of PV, yet in FI linearization and nominalization correspond more precisely to a parodic effect: the simplification of the sentence makes clichéd elements of language stand out and accumulate. The ‘simplifying in order to accumulate’ technique is visible in a syntactic structure that is not that widespread in previous works but proliferates in FI: the list.

On the mimetic level, in dialogues we have observed a prevalence of paratactic sentences, where often the subordinating link is cancelled and replaced by asyndetic coordination. Linearization, together with typical devices of spoken language, contributes to a general impression of orality. Monologues instead present more hypotactic sentences; however, as in the case of diegesis, the structure of the sentence is fundamentally paratactic, based on a 'static' syntax made of appositions coordinated one to the other. When there are sentences with a high level of embedding, coordination of subordinates, repetition of structures, and omission of subordinating links mitigate hypotaxis as in diegesis. Basically, the similarities between mimetic and diegetic monologues that we have noticed during the analysis of length and composition are here confirmed. Synchronically, FI mimesis reveals a higher complexity compared to works in *lingua media*, and also a slightly higher complexity compared to PV, probably due to the presence of monologues. Still, in terms of degree of subordination, FI mimesis does not exceed real spoken informal and formal public situations.

As in the previous case studies, the analysis of the syntax will be complemented by the study of other important devices that contribute to the overall stylistic project of FI: nominal style and punctuation.

5.3 Nominal Style

Syntactic linearity, simplification, dynamism, stasis, brevity and accumulation are supported in FI by an important stylistic device: nominal style. We saw already in the previous case studies that its presence was significant, in particular in PV; yet in FI this presence is further enhanced, as the following comparative table shows:

Table 5-27 – Nominal style: Comparison PV, RP, FI

| | PV diegesis | RP | FI diegesis |
|---|-------------|--------|-------------|
| Predicative nominal Sentences as % of total number of sentences | 18.29% | 2.42% | 15.3% |
| Mixed sentences as % of total number of sentences | 8.13% | 13.71% | 15.85% |
| Verbal sentences as % of total Number of sentences | 73.58% | 83.87% | 68.85% |

The presence of nominal style is quite high in PV, where nominal and mixed sentences are together 26.4% of the total; it drops in RP, where nominal and mixed sentences reach 16.1%; while in FI is the highest, with 31.1%. Both PV and FI are well over the average percentage of predicative nominal sentences in narrative indicated by De Mauro, 8.4%; whereas RP lies underneath this average.⁵³ The reason for this uneven development is because most nominal style devices appear in reportage, which is not present in RP. Whereas in FI the on-the-spot report is one of the fundamental styles, and indeed all of the types of nominal style devices analysed in this section come from there. We will take a look at predicative nominal sentences and clauses, nominalizations, long appositions, units starting with *con* or *in*, lists, and explore the range of stylistic outcomes they can generate according to their position in the context and function. I will argue that nominal style is not only a fundamental device that recreates the agility and rapidity of spoken language, but that in its various syntactic realizations it also decisively helps translate Arbasino's poetics of *realismo critico* onto the page.

5.3.1 Rapidity, Conciseness and Objectivity

I will firstly consider nominal structures that are used to 'speed up' narration, creating agile and quick structures that communicate immediacy, conciseness, objectivity, and generally give a spoken flavour to the sentence: predicative nominal sentences and clauses. They are sentences or clauses where the verbal predicate is cancelled and the nominal part of the sentence left assumes a predicative function, hence the feeling of dynamism, combined with that of impersonality and a-temporality due to the lack of indication of person and tense. Thus, they make an important contribution to the lively character of the on-the-spot report.

These nominal devices are usually found in FI in highlighted positions as short sentences between two full-stops or as short clauses at the beginning of the sentence separated from the rest by colon or semi-colon. The combination of nominal style and segmentation through punctuation further increases the sense of dryness and rapidity of the nominal structure, as we can see in this passage:

⁵³ De Mauro, PTLLIN, p. 41.

(31) Appena arrivato a casa sua a Roma (ha un appartamento nuovo in via Giulia, tutto foderato di finto-legno come una scatola di sigari, e io starò lì in questi giorni) ho fatto appena in tempo a lasciar giù le mie robe. Una doccia, svelta. A dormire: erano le quattro della mattina, lungo la strada m'ero fermato a fare dei giochi nelle pinete di Pisa, con un buon odore di pioggia e di caprifoglio fiorito, splendido. Un'altra doccia; e subito, prima ancora di mezzogiorno, abbiamo dovuto ributtarci in strada per venire a prendere questi qui. (p. 579)

'Una doccia, svelta' is a short predicative nominal sentence where both syntax and semantic ('svelta') convey dynamism; it also features a prosodic comma between 'una doccia' and 'svelta', used to signal the border between two intonational units and therefore letting a spoken flavour emerge. 'A dormire' and 'Un'altra doccia' are predicative nominal clauses put at the beginning of the sentence, separated by the rest of it by a strong punctuation mark, colon or semicolon. Again, in their highlighted position they convey concision and rapidity, as well as impersonality and a-temporality. We can imagine how the clause would look like if the verbal predicate had been used, e.g. 'Sono andato a dormire' and 'Ho fatto un'altra doccia': the liveliness of the sentence would be lost, as would the feeling of 'present moment'.

It is clear that nominal style is here part of a general aim of communicating dynamism and spoken informality, given the use of conjunctions, adverbs and adjectives that semantically convey haste, such as 'appena', 'subito' 'svelta'; the use of repetitions ('Appena arrivato a casa sua [...] ho fatto appena in tempo'); the apocope ('lasciar'); and the use of generic and regional terms or expressions ('robe', 'lasciar giù'). On the other hand, this dynamism and informality contrast with the lyrical tone suggested by the hidden quotation of a famous poem of the Italian literary tradition, D'Annunzio's *La pioggia nel pineto*. Key terms and images of the poem are re-used here in a low context, a homosexual encounter in the pinewood, with a parodic aim.⁵⁴

The use of predicative nominal clauses at the beginning of the sentence, isolated from the rest by a colon or semi-colon is a typical stylistic device in Arbasino's

⁵⁴ As Cortellessa points out, for Arbasino's generation D'Annunzio was an intolerable author. As Alfredo Giuliani recalls: 'Per chi era giovane negli anni Quaranta e Cinquanta, il D'Annunzio melenso-eroico fornito dalla scuola era quasi repellente'. Arbasino will subsequently reconcile with D'Annunzio's works but, in the early 1960s, his scorn for this author is well underway. Andrea Cortellessa, 'Imaginifico', in *Alberto Arbasino*, ed. by Marco Belpoliti and Elio Grazioli, Riga, 18 (Milan: Marcos y Marcos, 2001), pp. 307-21 (pp. 307-8).

writing, which we can trace back to the short stories of PV. However, if in PV its use was sporadic, in FI it becomes solidly established and very widespread, an authentic stylistic device. As we argued in the case study on PV, this construction is probably borrowed from journalistic writing, which uses it in order to condense information and express it in the most impersonal, and seemingly objective, way.⁵⁵ Similarly, Arbasino uses predicative nominal clauses at the beginning of the sentence with the function of giving a quick glimpse into the situation, in a brief and semantically full way:

- (32) Neanche una parola, fra questo e la Fragolona: lei con un bocchino d'oro lungo il doppio del giusto si guarda in giro molto disinvolta, e si sporge ad afferrare con un'unghia alla spalla una piccolina abbastanza cieca [...] (p. 773)

In some cases, predicative nominal clauses are combined with lists, again favourite structures of journalistic writing, because they avoid subordination, and therefore any subjective hierarchy. The following examples are from FI and from a newspaper article respectively:

- (33) Ogni tanto, un ingorgo del traffico: fischietti della polizia, tram fermi che segnalano coi lampeggiatori, e dei mostrini pallidi che s'agitano in mezzo alla strada, bassi, con tanti capelli sulla faccia e gli occhiali neri anche di sera, senza collo: i fascisti. (p. 898)
- (34) Arrivo a Orly alle undici, Chaban Delmas e Schumann che attendevano gli ospiti; inni nazionali, rassegna del picchetto d'onore, scambio di saluti e di complimenti. (Dardano, *Il linguaggio dei giornali italiani*, p. 312)

In both examples, the predicative nominal clause introduces the situation without indications of time and person. The list that follows makes objects stand out, accompanied by specifications (complements, relative clauses, appositions). Thus, a situation is presented and then described in an impersonal, documentarist and also visual manner. However, because Arbasino is here mimicking the objective language of newspapers and playfully mixes up

⁵⁵ Dardano, *Il linguaggio dei giornali italiani*, p. 313. Interestingly, this device is used in those years by Arbasino also in his lifestyle pieces for journals, evidence of the fact that it had become part of Arbasino's style: 'Però, annata fiacca: in giro, al massimo, Simone Renant invecchiata e rotonda, Magali Noël biondissima e abbronzatissima, Betsy Blair che si nota poco'. Alberto Arbasino, 'La dolce alienazione', in Alberto Arbasino, *Parigi o cara* (Milan: Adelphi, 2004), pp. 179-203 (p. 179).

narrative and journalistic writing, nominal style becomes a way to express not only objectivity, but also an objectification of language.

5.3.2 The Triumph of the Stereotype

Another way to foster impersonality, a-temporality and objectivity in narration is by increasing the presence of nouns in the text through nominalizations. Nominalizations imply the transformation of a linguistic element (any type and category) into a noun.⁵⁶ In FI we observe a significant increase in the use of nominalizations compared with the previous works. We can for example look at the following sentence, which is built entirely on nominal style, also thanks to three nominalizations (underlined):

(35) Paste e chicche al crepuscolo, di frutta, con delle barbagliate, in una offelleria antichissima che è il trionfo del marron glacé: tutto un matrimonio fra il merlo guelfo e la Regina Margherita; dentro-e-fuori in non meno di quattro cinema; e l'arrivo a Assisi che fa già buio, con frati e ceri da Boris sotto le volte della chiesa bassa. (p. 693)

All three nominalizations replace a verbal predicate: 'il trionfo' < 'trionfa'; 'dentro-e-fuori' < 'andiamo dentro e fuori' (i.e. 'entriamo e usciamo'); 'l'arrivo' < 'arriviamo'. In this way, as was the case for predicative nominal sentences, indications of person and time are cancelled, and the narration is at the same time more impersonal and visual, as well as syntactically simpler. For example, choosing the verbal predicate 'trionfa' instead of the noun 'il trionfo' would imply the use of a different relative pronoun in the clause: 'che è il trionfo del marron glacé' < 'in cui trionfa il marron glacé', where 'che' is a more common pronoun than 'in cui'. Needless to say, nominalizations are also widespread in journalistic writing for exactly the same reasons; in example 34 above the nominalization is 'scambio di saluti e di complimenti'.⁵⁷

At the same time, nominalization represents a way to highlight stereotypical terms or expressions, derived either from literary tradition or from everyday language. For example, the phrase 'il trionfo del marron glacé' might recall the title of one of D'Annunzio's works, *Trionfo della morte*, in a parodic key. We

⁵⁶ Fiorentino, 'Nominalizzazioni'.

⁵⁷ Dardano, *Il linguaggio dei giornali italiani*, p. 301.

cannot exclude the possibility however that the phrase ‘il trionfo di’+noun had at the time entered the everyday language of *media borghesia*, possibly through fashion/design journal articles, and therefore that our author is here quoting a linguistic tic. The link with the world of fashion or design is suggested by the observation that Arbasino often uses nominalization in combination with fashion or design items: ‘il trionfo del foulard’, ‘il trionfo del ferro battuto’, etc. In these contexts, the phrase indeed implies that the triumphing item is very trendy and chic.⁵⁸ Likewise, ‘dentro-e-fuori’, or its equivalents ‘avanti-e-indietro’, ‘su e giù’, very widespread throughout the corpus, could be quotations of stereotypical expressions used in the everyday *medio borghese* language, that Arbasino is recreating in this novel. Surely they are also authorial linguistic tics, since the hyphenized nouns ‘dentro-e-fuori’, ‘avanti-e-indietro’ reappear in other works by Arbasino: his citational drive not only includes other authors’ works, but also his own.⁵⁹

Besides nominalizations, other nominal constructions can be identified as fundamental in favouring conciseness and objectivity on one hand and parodying the language of *media borghesia* on the other. What helps in their identification is the frequency with which they appear in the corpus, which points to their status as linguistic tics of the *medio borghese* language. In example 35 above, we find for instance the construction ‘tutto+un/uno’+noun: ‘tutto un matrimonio tra il merlo guelfo e la Regina Margherita’. In this construction, *tutto* acquires an adverbial use with an intensive connotation, meaning ‘entirely’ ‘totally’

⁵⁸ From the archive of *La Repubblica*, which features articles published since 1984, emerges that in the year 1984 the phrase ‘il trionfo di’+noun with this meaning appears mostly in articles on culture and arts, as well as in Arbasino’s articles. The search in the archive of *Il Corriere della Sera* produced more interesting results: the phrase ‘il trionfo del’+noun in the years 1958-1963 appears in articles concerning performances as well as fashion. Some titles: Maria Pezzi, ‘Come sarà la donna chic 1958’, 31 gennaio 1958; Lorenzo Bocchi, ‘Parigi ha un nuovo idolo e la moda un nuovo dittatore’, 31 gennaio 1958. Occurrences also in many of Arbasino’s articles published on *Il Corriere*. Unfortunately, studies on the language of fashion focus more on lexis than syntax and I could not find evidence of the use of this phrase, e.g. Maria Catricalà, ‘Il linguaggio della moda’, in *Lingua e identità: una storia sociale dell’italiano*, ed. by Pietro Trifone (Rome: Carocci, 2012), pp. 105-129.

⁵⁹ The hyphenized version *dentro-e-fuori* and *avanti-e-indietro* can be traced only in other written texts by Arbasino – journal articles to be precise – and seem to be therefore an authorial creation. For example, there are three occurrences of *dentro-e-fuori* and four occurrences of *avanti-e-indietro* in articles by Arbasino in the archive of *La Repubblica*. CoLFIS has one occurrence of *dentro e fuori* as noun without hyphens in an article on a daily newspaper, and zero occurrences of *avanti e indietro*. In GRADIT *avanti e indietro* appears as noun but without hyphens, and indicates 1963 as the date of its first use: the date is the same as the publication of FI.

‘everywhere’ (and in some cases ‘only’).⁶⁰ It summarises a concept that, if expressed with verbal predicates, would appear as a longer sentence: ‘dappertutto si vede un matrimonio tra il merlo guelfo e la Regina Margherita’.

‘Tutto+un/uno’ recurs frequently in the corpus, especially in the collocation ‘tutto+un/uno’+personal name:⁶¹

(36) La sala è immensa, altissima, piena d’armigeri, quasi al buio. Tutto uno Zandonai. (p. 956)

(37) Nell’abbaino vicino tutto un Luigi Quindici. (p. 702)

Typically, the name that follows is the name of a musician, director, painter, actor etc., which metonymically (and, for those who do not share the same cultural framework, incomprehensibly) refer to his/her work or style. The construction condenses in few words a concept that would require at least a clause to be explained; at the same time, Arbasino is probably quoting an expression in vogue in the conversations of the cultural jet-set and socialite world frequented by the protagonists of the novel (and by the author himself).⁶²

Another frequent collocation is ‘tutto un/uno’+nominalization:

(38) ‘Da Roma! Chi ha chiesto Roma!’ Gridano ogni tanto dalla cassa del bar. Allora tutto un alzarsi, un rovesciare, un correre; si travolge la cassiera, cascano i bicchieri e i golf; montagne di giornali per terra; tutto un ‘venite a sentire anche voi quante glie ne [sic] dico a questo!’ (p. 636)

The first construction sees ‘tutto un’ plus a series of infinitives nominalized: instead of using the verbs conjugated (‘ci alziamo, rovesciamo, corriamo’) Arbasino prefers to transform them into nouns. In the second one, what follows ‘tutto un’ is actually an entire sentence in direct speech transformed into a noun. Clearly here the construction performs the reification of language: an

⁶⁰ GDLI, s.v. *tutto* §22.

⁶¹ The construction is very much used also in Arbasino’s journal articles: I found 101 occurrences of the construction in Arbasino’s articles in the archive of *La Repubblica*. It is also frequently used in a subsequent literary work, *La bella di Lodi* (1972). Della Corte, *Come ombre vivaci sullo sfondo*, p. 150.

⁶² A variant is formed by ‘nel/il+più puro’+personal name: ‘nel più puro Paul Morand’, ‘nel più puro Beniamino Gigli’, ‘il più puro Anna Karenina’.

utterance, uttered by someone, is transformed into a generic noun, losing in this way its uniqueness and becoming depersonalised.

Alongside ‘tutto un’, we should mention another very widespread nominal construction that points to stereotyped uses of language: *con*+noun and its variant *con*+article+possessive+noun’ (e.g. *con il suo*). As Ioan Gutia noted already in 1953, the prepositional phrase *con*+noun is a construction widely used in twentieth century narrative, and corresponds to the general preference for nominal style that started to circulate in that period. It avoids in many cases the use of a relative clause and recreates ‘[l’]immediatezza della lingua parlata’.⁶³ Its function is to present some data concerning an object without making the relationships that occur between them transparent: ‘la preposizione *con*, appunto, permette di non pensare ai rapporti esistenti fra i concetti, di cui si limita a registrare la presenza simultanea nello stesso oggetto’.⁶⁴

From this period onwards the construction enters also newspaper writing, as a means to avoid subordination, usually in conjunction with abstract nouns referring to the way an action is performed.⁶⁵ Likewise, in FI, *con*+noun allows the removal of subordinating links and at the same time focuses the attention on the noun; however, it is combined with concrete nouns and refers to persons or objects:

(39) I due Padri americani dicono subito insieme d’amar molto i film americani-commoventi: quelli con l’eroina sempre in lamé d’oro anche alle dieci di mattina, sempre vittima di sventure bizzarre e lacrimevoli, col suo visone e il suo tacco alto e le sue occhiaie e la sua bottiglia in mano. (p. 905)

(40) Inglese candidi delle colline, in lini gualciti e foulards, con le loro mantellette blu e i loro passettini corti. (p. 951)

The construction, especially in its variant with the possessive, ironically identifies a cliché, a feature stereotypically assigned to a person or a thing,

⁶³ Ioan Gutia, ‘Sull’uso della preposizione “con” nella prosa contemporanea’, *Lingua nostra*, 14 (1953), 52-5 (p. 19).

⁶⁴ Gutia, ‘Sull’uso della preposizione “con”’, p. 14. See also Herczeg, *Lo stile nominale in italiano*, p. 127.

⁶⁵ Dardano, ‘Il linguaggio dei giornali italiani’, pp. 305-07.

indicating that the persons described cannot but be accompanied by those elements.⁶⁶

From the examples presented in this section the close link between nominal style and reification of language emerges. Because of their brachylogy and looseness from syntactic links, nominal constructions allow the isolation, underlining and repetition of the linguistic stereotype or quotation; indeed, the nominal construction is itself the stereotype: 'il trionfo del', 'dentro-e-fuori', 'tutto un', 'con il suo'. In FI we are no longer presented with single examples of nominal constructions highlighting a linguistic stereotype as in RP; rather, we face linguistic commonplaces - in the form of nominal constructions - systematically listed and repeated throughout the novel. What Arbasino is creating is basically an encyclopaedia of worn-out expressions - and, therefore, of *idées reçues* - of the Italian *media borghesia* during the years of the Economic Boom. We are here at one of the highest points of expression of Arbasino's poetics of critical realism: the encyclopaedic quotation of stereotypes highlights the belief that literary language, in order to represent reality, cannot but repeat what has already been said, i.e. stereotypes. Moreover, the pervasive repetition of worn-out expressions underlines the conformism and lack of creativity of the language represented. The next section will examine a nominal structure that brings these features to extremes: the list.

5.3.3 Lists 'Arbasino Style'

An account of nominal style in FI cannot be considered complete if it does not include lists, given their contribution to the syntactic character and to the general stylistic project of the work. We already had the chance to discuss the syntactic features of this device above, when examples of lists were considered for their length or for their paratactic structure, and we also referred to its stylistic outcome and its relevance within Arbasino's poetics. In this section, I would like to discuss more specifically the development of lists within the novel, as well as adding more details on their function and meaning.

⁶⁶ Della Corte, who identified the frequent use of this construction in *La bella di Lodi*, argued: 'L'effetto più immediato di questo utilizzo dilatato della preposizione accoppiata all'aggettivo possessivo appare come una denuncia ironica di scelte stereotipate (e anche, qualche volta, come segnale dell'unicità di un oggetto attribuito, con effetto di distinzione, di identificazione)', Della Corte, *Come ombre vivaci sullo sfondo*, p. 148.

We have already stated that lists are mostly present in the narrator's discourse, especially in the on-the-spot report. But there is also a disparity in their distribution across the on-the-spot report: their presence seems to increase and their structure and typology change in the second half of FI. In the first chapters, lists are isolated and moderate in the number of items:

(41) Ben messo, anche: camicia celeste, occhi verdi, la sua canottiera rosa accollatissima, e i calzoncini di un marroncino giusto. (chapter 1, p. 636)

These lists are composed of appositions in series, which break down the appearance of a person, a place or an object into single components (Herczeg called them significantly 'apposizioni enumerative'); the number of items is limited.⁶⁷ Sometimes they are closed by an expression that hints at the possibility for the list to be enlarged, such as 'e tutto', shortening it and including what is not mentioned (similarly, in RP one finds lists closed with an 'ecc.', 'etcetera').

However, we can find examples of longer and more elaborate lists also in the first chapters, like the following:

(42) Il nome "Rosati", di un amico abatino, può diventare tutto: Roseida, se schiava di Achille; Rosilda, o Rosunda, come walkiria; Rosette o Roseuse, se ci si butta sul Marivaux o sul Direttorio; Rosiane, o magari Rosinoé, risalendo al Grand Siècle; Mrs. Rosay o Lady Rosefield, franando nel Pinero; se non addirittura Rosalie (governante); o Rosillide, come ninfa degli aliscafi. (ch. 1, p. 636)

Unlike the previous lists, here items are composed of one or two nouns coordinated, followed either by a comparative complement, a gerund+complement, a hypothetical subordinate clause. Still, the list is not excessive and not stratified, i.e. it has a fairly low number of items and does not open to lists within the list as the breakdown shows:

(43) Il nome "Rosati", di un amico abatino, può diventare tutto:
 1) Roseida, se schiava di Achille;
 2) Rosilda, o Rosunda, come walkiria;
 3) Rosette o Roseuse, se ci si butta sul Marivaux o sul Direttorio;
 4) Rosiane, o magari Rosinoé, risalendo al Grand Siècle;
 5) Mrs. Rosay o Lady Rosefield, franando nel Pinero;

⁶⁷ Herczeg, *Lo stile nominale in italiano*, p. 15.

- 6) se non addirittura Rosalie (governante);
- 7) o Rosillide, come ninfa degli aliscafi.

Apart from structural considerations, we should note the different function from the example 41: that one was a plain description; this is a catalogue of the possible variations of a name, with a clear playful intention.

As the novel progresses, lists start to have more elaborate structures, incorporating and exploiting other devices of nominal style, varying the components and creating layers of lists; we can see this example from chapter 6, already broken down to show its structure:

Stavolta la nostra Londra è così,
 A) cashmere,
 B) antiquari,
 C) negozi;
 D) e i vecchi calvi che sembrano già morti, immobili, nelle finestre dei clubs in St. James's già la mattina appena usciamo dalla tana;
 E) e il fischio per chiamare i tassi;
 F) e i ristoranti più buoni:
 Fi) Wheeler's,
 Fii) La Reserve,
 Fiii) il Cunningham,
 Fiv) il grill del Savoy;
 G) colazione con
 Gi) una vichyssoise,
 Gii) un roastbeef
 Giii) e quindici formaggi;
 H) oppure ostriche e birra scura, Guinness o Bass No.1, quelle meravigliose birre pesanti e dolci, grassissime, fatte proprio filtrando la segatura e gli stracci nell'acqua della Lyffe, e non per niente sempre Mr. Bloom si ferma ogni tanto durante i suoi giri per sorseggiare la sua Bass No. 1. (ch. 6, pp. 1062-3)

The first three items (A, B and C) are similar in structure (a noun without article), brief and coordinated through comma. Items D, E and F appear more elaborate, each further expanded by subordinate clauses or, in case of F, by a list within the list (Fi, Fii, Fiii, Fiv). The type of coordination also changes as D, E and F are coordinated by semicolon and the conjunction *e*, which stresses the feeling of addition. Item G also embeds another list (Gi, Gii, Giii), while item H is expanded by series of appositions to 'birra scura', one embedding into the other, and a final independent clause with a conclusive function.

The items in the list are composed of nominal phrases: item E ‘il fischio’ for example is a nominalization, one of the devices that we have seen Arbasino uses to increase the rate of nominality in the novel. Nominalizations are very useful because they transform verbs into nouns and therefore allow verbal clauses to be restructured and inserted in the list (‘fischiamo per chiamare i tassì’ > ‘il fischio per chiamare i tassì’). They contribute to the general impression of impersonality and objectivity, since marks of person and number are cancelled in the passage from verb to noun. Yet they also contribute to generating a chaotic enumeration: if we look again at the example above, we can see that the list puts together, on the same level, nouns referring to inanimate objects, actions and people.⁶⁸

Chaotic enumerations are typical of the lists found in the final chapters. Let us take a look at the following passage:

- (44) Dentro-e-fuori continui: ombrelli di portieri, sportelli di tassì, scrosci di pioggia, ventate di ‘thank you’, ‘thank you’, ‘please’, ‘I’m sorry’, ‘you’re welcome’, ‘thank you’, ‘never mind’, ‘mind the step’, ‘turn the knob’, ‘thank you’, ‘thank you’. Tutto uno sbattere di liftiers, commessi, commesse, fattorini, mani tese, mance, inchini, il resto che arriva - ‘pluff’ - per tubo pneumatico nei negozi, mucchi di cashmere sui banconi di legno, copie del ‘Times’ che scivolano sotto la porta, tintinnii di caffettiere, sforbiciature di parrucchieri, carta lucida, nastri colorati, pullovers infilati dalla testa, vestaglie di seta che volano, profumi provati col tappo sul dorso della mano, scontri rapidissimi in ascensore fra uno che sale e uno che esce, ‘dove vai?’ ‘torno subito, ho una cosa!’, seggiole messe o tolte dai camerieri di sotto a Desideria, Luigi che assaggia il vino e dice che va bene, applausi a teatro davanti al sipario che s’abbassa e si chiude. (ch. 6, pp. 1062-3)

Here we have two lists following one the other. They incorporate anything, hence their chaotic character: pieces of conversation, sounds, people and any sorts of objects. From a structural point of view, we can notice how verbal clauses are systematically restructured into nominal ones in order to be serialized and listed. For example, there are many nominalizations, e.g. ‘le caffettiere tintinnano’ > ‘tintinnii di caffettiere’. Other constructions present

⁶⁸ According to Umberto Eco, chaotic enumerations are ‘assembly of things deliberately devoid of any apparent reciprocal relationship’. However, it can be argued also that this is a coherent list by excess, that is, a list that ‘puts together entities that have some form of kinship among them’ because all of the items represent an aspect of London experienced by the group of friends. Umberto Eco, *The Infinity of Lists*, trans. by Alastair McEwen (London: MacLehose, 2009), p. 254.

the sequence subject+relative clause, where the verbal predicate is moved in the subordinate clause and made dependent on the noun, which assumes the predicative value: 'Luigi assaggia' > '(c'è) Luigi che assaggia'. Then we find constructions of the type subject+participial clause, which entail a transformation from an active into a passive clause, subsequently deprived of the verbal predicate: 'infiliamo pullovers' > 'pullovers sono infilati' > 'pullovers infilati'. Finally, we recognize some of the nominal constructions indicated above as linguistic tics, like 'tutto un'+noun and 'dentro-e-fuori'.

It is clearly visible how nominalizations and the simplification of syntactic links, combined with a maximally linear structure where each 'item' is added one to the other, allow lists like this to reach a high degree of objectivity and impersonality. Basically, in this list, only nouns stand out: it is an apotheosis of the visual and of the cinematographic. Yet, at the same time, the serialization, levelling and accumulation of stereotyped expressions, of recurrent phrases, and of direct speech point at their reification. Language seems in this list an object deprived of meaning, with which the author plays and takes pleasure, hence the clash of languages generated by the use of foreign terms and the phonic games, as for example the homoteleuton ('ombrelli di portiere, sportelli di tassi'), the rhymes and alliterations ('fattorini, mani tese, mance, inchini'). In other words, the list condenses into a short space, thanks to its serial and paratactic structure, a parodic encyclopaedia of conformist language.

Why do lists like this appear just from the second half of the novel? The second part of the novel is where the effects of the Economic Boom on landscape, society and culture are introduced, in particular the voracious desire for things and the conformism of mass culture.⁶⁹ Therefore chaotic lists, by putting items in series and accumulating them without a hierarchy, are a powerful stylistic tool used to represent the accumulation, levelling, depersonalization, and

⁶⁹ It is worth pointing out that there is no outspoken biting critique on Arbasino's part: he will mature a more polemical and pessimistic stance on Italian society later on, in the late 1970s and the early 1980s in his pamphlets, as Bruno Pischetta shows in *Scrittori polemisti: Pasolini, Sciascia, Arbasino, Testori, Eco* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2011), pp. 178-82. In FI there is no radical reaction to the changes that Italy is undertaking: the protagonists express both negative and positive opinions on it (the choice of a non-Italian narrator – Elefante is Swiss – further underline the objective intention).

conformism of things, people and language.⁷⁰ It is not by chance that we find a list describing - possibly for the first time in Italian literature - an *autogrill*. *Autogrills* and the newly inaugurated *Autostrada del Sole* are the symbols of Italian economic growth and are seen in FI as places of encounter and mixing of social classes, thus as places where class differences collapse and the same commodities are available to everyone:

(45) Frecce, pensiline, sottopassaggi, e porte che si aprono solo in un senso, nell'altro no; cariche tutte dei soliti divieti di sosta. Dentro, poi, veramente di tutto. Un lampadario di cristallo tanto largo da dire subito "no, ma non è possibile! Che esagerati!" se lo si vedesse a Caserta o a Versailles. Tutti gli stands intorno, e vendono biscottini, salatini, amarettini, coccodrillini, sempre coi loro sensi unici, e animali di pezza anche più enormi del solito. Il banco centrale è un altare basilicale anche un po' centrale telefonica, con cuochi ricciuti a mezzobusto e un gradino più su tantissime servettine fra la soubrette e la tennista con fiocco al collo, scarpa bassa e gonnellino plissé, e le mani cariche di centrini di merletto di plastica, attente a gettarle sulle superfici a specchio. (ch. 5, p. 988)

The *autogrill* is described halfway between a modern fairy tale castle, with a labyrinth and a chandelier, and a profane cathedral, whose sacred icons are now the goods proposed by the new faith in capitalist progress, and whose ministers are cooks and waitresses distributing plastic placemats instead of consecrated wafers. The description is absolutely parodic, aimed at depicting the *autogrill* as the temple of kitsch and Masscult: the 'exaggerated' chandelier competing with those of Caserta or Versailles; the list of commodities all indicated with the diminutive ('biscottini, salatini, amarettini, coccodrillini'); the tasteless replica of the icons of the time ('servettine fra la soubrette e la tennista') or of artisanal products ('centrini di merletto di plastica'). The list as levelling devalues the items listed and underlines their uselessness. If things, people and language have lost their value, what is left is the *divertissement* of the

⁷⁰ While the first three chapters are set in places or present situations strictly tied to the upper class (the protagonists are moving from café-society parties to Spoleto's music festival, from an opera theatre to a summer holiday villa etc.) from chapter 4 Italy's changing landscape is introduced: supermarkets (La Standa), warehouses and the *autogrill*, thus the temples of consumerism, are mentioned, together with the motorway and advertisement signs. See, for example, FI, pp. 855 and 998.

metalinguistic game: quoting conformist language in an a-hierarchical and levelling structure.⁷¹

With this use of the list, Arbasino moves away from that of his declared master Gadda: despite the common opinion that puts the two authors together when talking about lists (circulated by Arbasino himself, and re-used by some critics), the two seem to invest this rhetorical and syntactic device with different meanings.⁷² For Gadda, chaotic lists are tools that allow him to show the complexity of reality and to establish new relationships among the objects of reality by cataloguing them, with the ultimate aim of reaching a better understanding of the world, an aim that is however always frustrated.⁷³ For Arbasino, instead, lists allow the collection of clichés, worn-out speech forms, and phonic games mainly, as I have shown, as a *divertissement*, a parody of reality made for the author's pleasure. Ultimately, as Segre indicates, formal experimentation - including lists - in Gadda are attempts to immerse in reality, whereas in Arbasino they are linguistic explorations permanently connoted by parody and by intellectual detachment.⁷⁴

In Arbasino the list expresses a way of conceiving of literature that has strong connections with theories and literary trends of the 1960s. First of all, as we explained in the first chapter, with Barthes' structuralism, which sees literature as an exploration of language and objects of reality as signs that the author

⁷¹ According to Alfonso Berardinelli, the use of the list also reflects the absence of an end to the story: just as the chaotic list does not have a start or an end, so the narration of FI is circular: 'lo stile scelto è quello dell'enumerazione, dell'accumulo antigerarchico. Il momento culminante della narrazione non arriva mai. Non ci sono un inizio e una fine della storia raccontata: il mondo al presente è un 'miracolo' eterno, nasce dal nulla e precipita nel nulla. O meglio, è un sogno che non deve finire mai.' Alfonso Berardinelli, 'Le angosce dello sviluppo: scrittori italiani e modernizzazione 1958-1975' in Alfonso Berardinelli, *Casi critici: dal postmoderno alla mutazione* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2007), pp. 231-304 (p. 249).

⁷² Umberto Eco for example puts the two names together in his study *The Infinity of Lists* and stresses the similarities in the two writers in composing lists as reproduction of chaos; Eco, *The Infinity of Lists*, p. 324. Rinaldi affirms instead that 'l'elenco di Arbasino è lontano tuttavia dagli elenchi tipici delle pagine gaddiane' and Della Corte confirms it. Rinaldi, 'Arbasino o della superficie', p. 205; Della Corte, *Come ombre vivaci sullo sfondo*, p. 190.

⁷³ See, on the philosophical background of Gadda's narrative, Katrin Wehling-Giorgi, *Gadda and Beckett: Storytelling, Subjectivity and Fracture* (Oxford: Legenda, 2014), pp. 16-27.

⁷⁴ Segre affirms about Arbasino: 'le sperimentazioni formali non vogliono mai essere, nei suoi libri, uno sforzo di immersione nel reale, e nella realtà sociale. Il suo godibilissimo *verbiage* corrisponde a una costante parodistica quasi senza inflessioni'; Segre, 'Punto di vista, polifonia ed espressionismo nel romanzo italiano', p. 42. We can recall here lists in Sanguineti's poems of the time, characterized by verbal *divertissement* but in his case with an ideological intent. See for example, poem 9 in *Purgatorio dell'Inferno* (1960-63). Edoardo Sanguineti, *Segnalibro: poesie 1951-1981* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2010), p. 82.

firstly has to isolate and then to regroup so as to manifest the rule of their functioning. Also in France, we find the *Nouveau roman*, which proposes a poetics of objects, an impersonal and objective description of the things of reality, without any comment or interpretation from the narrator. Significantly, lists of objects are found in the works of the leading representative of *nouveau roman*, Robbe-Grillet. Although Arbasino did not share his view on the death of the author, it is important to note the use of the same stylistic and rhetoric device.⁷⁵ More consonances can be observed in Perec. His novel *Les choses* (1965) shows the spell cast by the consumerist society on a young middle-class couple: the infinite circle of desire and consumption of things and the aspiration (always frustrated) to a level of wealth and social status that would allow them to live up to their desires. Jérôme and Sylvie, in this rapidly moving circle, lose any individuality and become reified, just as the protagonists of FI in their frenzied adventures around Italy.⁷⁶ In Perec, as in Arbasino, there is no condemnation of the consumerist society; rather a parodic and ironic display of it, which also in Perec involves the use of lists of commodities.⁷⁷

Finally, Arbasino's use of lists takes inspiration from one of his models, Flaubert. Arbasino himself surreptitiously suggests this in a passage in *Certi romanzi*, quoting in brackets Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*:

Riscoprire semmai sull'esempio di Gadda la gran forza realistica-espressionistica di categorie retoriche antiche come la Descrizione e l'Elenco. Vedere la Realtà per Elenchi! (Ma già il Bouvard d'altronde...)⁷⁸

As Jennifer Yee points out, the Flaubertian inventory is a parody of the age's encyclopaedic drive to collect and classify. Its 'infinite, and chaotic, profusion', its anti-hierarchical and levelling structure flattens 'content into nothingness', so that the catalogue of knowledge - that for example we find in *Bouvard et*

⁷⁵ Della Corte, *Come ombre vivaci sullo sfondo*, p. 55.

⁷⁶ Andrea Canobbio, 'X o la storia delle Cose', in Georges Perec, *Le cose: una storia degli anni Sessanta* (Turin: Einaudi, 2011), pp. V-XLI (pp. XVI-XVII).

⁷⁷ Canobbio, 'X o la storia delle Cose', p. VII. For examples of lists see Georges Perec, *Les choses: une histoire des années soixante* (Paris: Juillard, 1993), pp. 35, 97, 111, 131.

⁷⁸ Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, p. 1229.

Pécuchet - 'turns out to be no more than a symbol of sterility'.⁷⁹ The absence of content is mirrored on the linguistic level by the collections of clichés, worn-out speech forms, *idées reçues* in Flaubert's enumeration: a utilisation of language as object that stands for the inadequacy of language to represent reality.⁸⁰ Similarly, for Arbasino traditional literature has lost any ability to represent reality and its language, the *lingua media*, which is also the language of the ascending *media borghesia* of the Boom, is not able to express anything: it is a collection of commonplaces.⁸¹ To overcome this impasse, and lay the foundations of a modern realist novel, what is left for the author is constantly to highlight and parody this condition, and the list is the tool that allows this.

In summary, in this section what has emerged is the fundamental importance of nominal style in building the objective, impersonal, visual reportage of the narrative parts of the novel, and at the same time in contributing to the parodic reification of *lingua media*. The increase compared to previous works in the use of nominal constructions, and in particular of the list is the mark of the stylistic maturity of the author, who has finally fully developed a personal style. In FI linguistic choices finally appear fully coherent with his overall artistic project.

5.4 Punctuation

In this section, I will examine some uses of punctuation that contribute to the general stylistic project of FI. Generally, FI is not lacking in the use of punctuation, as sometimes is the case in experimental works.⁸² Often

⁷⁹ Jennifer Yee, 'Flaubert's *Salammbô* and the Subversion of Meaning', in Jennifer Yee, *Exotic Subversions in Nineteenth-Century French Fiction* (Oxford: Legenda, 2008), pp. 63-82 (p. 65).

⁸⁰ Yee, 'Flaubert's *Salammbô* and the Subversion of Meaning', pp. 72-3.

⁸¹ Exactly in these years a debate around the possibility or impossibility for literature to challenge the 'labyrinth', i.e. to be a tool for the interpretation of the world, is developing, involving New Avant-Garde theorists and Calvino. The former, having lost any faith in the possibility of imposing a rational grid on the complexity of reality, think of literature as a linguistic activity *per se*, in particular Guglielmi. Picchione, *The New Avant-Garde in Italy*, pp. 41-2.

⁸² Concerning authors who belonged to the New Avant-Garde, for example Nanni Balestrini completely abolishes punctuation in some of his works (however published in the 1980s: *Gli invisibili*, 1987 and *L'editore*, 1989); other experimental works where punctuation lacks are Giuseppe Berto's *Il male oscuro* (1964) and more, recently, Giuseppe Mariotti's *Matilde* (1993). Antonelli, 'Sintassi e stile nella narrativa italiana', p. 696; Riccardo Tesi, 'La sintassi del "monologo esteriore" nel *Male oscuro*' in Gatta, Tesi, *Lingua d'autore*, pp. 47-62 (p. 62, fn. 15).

punctuation in FI has a standard and conventional logical-syntactic function; but in some cases it can break with the norm and take more expressive functions, which can range from the disruption of the syntax, to the partition of the text into informative units, to the recreation of the prosody of orality. These uses started to appear already in PV and continued in RP, to become fully consolidated stylistic features here.

5.4.1 Unconventional Colons

One of the punctuation marks often used in ways that diverge from those indicated by the grammatical norm is the colon:

(46) ‘Maria! Qui!’ le fa la Fragolona con prepotenza artigliandola: e la piccolina coprendo istintivamente il suo gelato con una mano macchiata di scuro abbassa ancora la voce per dirle ‘ma io cercavo Cesarone’. Però ci riesce quasi subito, a scivolarle via di sotto: poi sparisce immediatamente. (p. 773)

(47) E anche interi spuntini, sulle loro tavoline: o almeno cocktails lunghi da fare, tutto uno shaker e un ghiaccio e un cristallo [...] (pp. 1068-69)

In these examples, the presence of the colon is not conventionally justified insofar as this punctuation mark does not execute any of the roles normally attributed to it, namely introducing or explaining something.⁸³ Rather, it appears in combination with the coordinating conjunctions *e* and *o*, or with the adverb *poi*, thus it connects clauses with a relationship of addition or alternative, or clauses that follow a temporal sequence. If any punctuation mark should have been added to accompany *e*, *o* or *poi*, a comma or a semicolon would have been more justified, according to the standard. We saw a similar use of the colon in RP, although less frequent: the aim here is the same as in the previous work, namely, to disrupt the reader’s expectations and provoke a reflection on language, as well as to creatively play with punctuation in the same way as he plays with language in general.⁸⁴

⁸³ Mortara Garavelli, *Prontuario di punteggiatura*, pp. 99-104.

⁸⁴ The same use of the colon seems to continue in subsequent works, for example *La bella di Lodi* (1972), thus confirming the status of stylistic feature of Arbasino’s writing. Della Corte, *Come ombre vivaci sullo sfondo*, p. 179.

In the following example the colon not only creates disruption, but is also used twice in the same sentence, a practice discouraged by grammars:

- (48) Cravatte: di foulard, un po' opache e polverose, e da sera o da vecchio, come a Milano e a Roma non se ne vedono mai nei negozi, e se mai solo a Firenze e a Genova: coi disegni minuti che ricordano i fulmini di Zeus o i raggi dello Spirito Santo. (p. 1064)

The first colon separates a noun ('Cravatte') from its complements ('di foulard, etc. '), elements that would not conventionally be separated by punctuation marks. The second colon is instead syntactically justified, having a 'regular' explicative function; however, the choice of using another colon further segments the sentence and points to the intention of disrupting expectations of grammatical correctness.

As we noticed for RP, Gadda's influence is probably present in the use of colon+coordinating conjunction or of more colons in one sentence: indeed, the author of *Pasticciccio* overuses this punctuation mark even more than Arbasino does. Also the functions of the colon in Gadda's work, as outlined by Tonani, are very close to those of Arbasino's colons: segmenting the components of the sentence, highlighting parts of the sentence, flattening subordination, etc.⁸⁵ However, we should bear in mind the distinctions made when talking about lists, which can be applied to the use of punctuation as well. While in Gadda colons 'mettono in scena la costruzione di un nuovo ordine logico-sintattico, che, nel momento stesso in cui mima il caos, arriva a dominarlo organizzandolo secondo leggi e gerarchie nuove', in Arbasino the colon is first and foremost a quotation, and thus a reference to the repetitive nature of literary language and language in general, as well as an element that produces playful disruptions.⁸⁶

5.4.2 Fragmenting Semicolons and Full Stops

In FI there are punctuation marks that can be used to fragment information into blocks and assign special emphasis to them: for example, the semicolon. Let us consider the following example:

⁸⁵ Tonani, *Punteggiatura d'autore*, pp. 136-38. See also Emilio Manzotti, 'Note sulla sintassi della *Cognizione*'.

⁸⁶ Tonani, *Punteggiatura d'autore*, pp. 138-39.

- (49) Sembrano tutti antiquari fiorentini, anche un po' cantanti dilettanti, non più giovani; e cruscanti nella parlata. Tutto un 'pispino', una 'grulleria'. (p. 770)

Here the semicolon isolates the last adjectival phrase on the right and puts emphasis on it; without the semicolon, 'e cruscanti nella parlata' would have been interpreted as part of the same informative block as the preceding phrases.⁸⁷ The reason why it is isolated and emphasized is that it is important for understanding the meaning of the sentence that follows, 'Tutto un "pispino", una "grulleria"': since the characters speak in the vernacular supported by the Accademia della Crusca (they are 'cruscanti'), their speech is full of Florentine words ('pispino' and 'grulleria'). At the same time, the use of semicolon here also represents a rhythmic break, isolating an octosyllable.⁸⁸

Similarly, the full stop can perform a fragmenting function and slowing down of the rhythm, for example when it breaks down portions of text that are actually strictly cohesive. Most of the time, Arbasino uses the fragmenting full stop in lists, to create variation in rhythms and bring to surface connotations that would otherwise be hidden, as the following example shows:

- (50) Un continuo vortice di regali, un gorgo, un risucchio, anche fra tutti loro; per affetto o per scherzo: dischi di Alice in Wonderland con Joan Greenwood, legumiere scompagnate della Compagnia delle Indie, pressepapiers di cristallo con le margheritine dentro, scatoline di Battersea, uova di Pasqua russe, tabacchierine tedesche, portapastiglie di smalto, con su scritto 'Pump Room - A prefent [sic] from Bath'. Farfalle in quadro, pelose e blu sotto vetro. La carta da lettera con fodera striata gialla e nera uso leopardo. Jellies al porto, allo sherry, al Bordeaux. Scatolone di verbena per infusi invernali e serali, o di 'dowager tea'. Torte nuziali lilla e mauve, di zucchero. Soldoni di peppermint al cioccolato che si comprano a metraggio. Vasi di cristallo tipo Lalique, in forma di balena, con Giona (opaco) dentro, espressionistico e morto. (p. 1066)

At first the list flows freely, with commas communicating a fast accumulation of things (the 'vortice', 'gorgo', 'risucchio' of objects of consumerism referred to at the beginning). Then, when full stops are inserted, the reader is subjected to

⁸⁷ According to Ferrari, from a textual point of view in this case the punctuation mark indicates the presence of a second informative focus in the rheme. Ferrari, *Le ragioni del testo*, p. 106.

⁸⁸ It is the type of semicolon that, according to Serianni, has a 'funzione ritmico-stilistica', i.e. that creates 'una pausa marcata tra due elementi che abitualmente verrebbero separate da una semplice virgola', Serianni, 'Sul punto e virgola nell'italiano contemporaneo', p. 255.

a forced slowing of the pace as if the accumulation was now going *au ralenti*, with an effect of emphasis on each item. Crucially, the emphasis contrasts with the uselessness and bad taste of the things portrayed. Punctuation, therefore, in this case enhances the parodic effect of the list, since each full stop forces the reader to pause and reflect on the kitsch (thus repetitive and mass-produced) nature of the things described.

5.4.3 Marks of Orality

Finally, we can take a look at the use of the prosodic comma, which marks the informative units as well as the intonational borders of the sentence, allowing a flavour of *parlato* to emerge. We saw some sporadic examples of it already in PV and RP; its use in FI clearly increases, pointing at a growing interest in the recreation of spoken language in this work. Prosodic comma is often present in the narrator's reportage:

- (51) La Canobbiana ha sete. Affondata in una bergère al centro dell'altana chiama Antonio per cognome, con prepotenza, e si fa portar da bere, lasciandole lì la bottiglia. Infila naso e mento nel bicchiere, insieme. Mentre lui si china, lo afferra per un braccio, sempre come se stesse dando gli ordini a un cameriere, domanda i nomi di almeno dieci persone che son lì sedute alle sue spalle e ridono, le ridono addirittura addosso; e lei, irritatissima perché non capisce cosa stanno dicendo; continua a picchiar gran colpi di ventaglio sulle braccia di quelli che le passano vicini. (p. 770)

As we can see, the comma appears after the subject 'lei' and separates it from the predicate, here lacking the copula ('e lei, (è) irritatissima'). Conventionally, a comma would not separate the subject from the predicate when they are so close. Yet, in this case, its function is of isolating the topic-given information ('lei', which refers back in the co-text to 'la Cannobiana') from the rest of the clause, which is comment-new information, and suggesting that an intonational unit is closing, thus marking an intonational discontinuity between topic and comment. We can note how the semi-colon underlined is essential to making the comma prosodic, insofar as it makes 'irritatissima perché non capisce cosa stanno dicendo' the comment of the utterance. If a comma had replaced the semicolon, 'irritatissima perché non capisce cosa stanno dicendo' would be a parenthetical clause, and our textual-prosodic comma would become a logical-syntactic comma, marking the borders of a parenthetical clause:

(52) e lei, irratissima perché non capisce cosa stanno dicendo, continua a picchiar gran colpi di ventaglio sulle braccia di quelli che le passano vicini.

The semi-colon, instead, breaks the utterance in two utterances, and the comma acquires in this way a prosodic value.

As we can see in the example above, the prosodic comma accompanies a predicative nominal clause, 'lei, irratissima'. The high number of cases in which this comma appears in FI in combination with nominal constructions points undoubtedly to a precise choice by the author: that of making brachylogy and prosodic factors stand out and therefore giving an impression of orality. For this reason, the prosodic comma is very much present also in mimesis:

(53) 'Perché, prima, dunque, c'è stato il cabaret... Lui e una sua amica svizzera, una certa Mère Hibou... una sciagurata... scappa-da-casa... pazza... d'ottima famiglia... che va a finir male di certo... Dovevi vedere il posto dove abitava a Milano... nel vecchio centro... Due stanze in una mansarda chic... lei, stufa di ghisa, tutta roba di ferro, di zinco... [...]' (p. 702)

The comma in 'lei, stufa di ghisa' isolates the topic-given information (i.e. 'lei'), and suggests that an intonational unit is closing, marking an intonational discontinuity between topic and comment and letting a spoken flavour emerge. The combination with suspension points further enhances the spoken attitude of this passage.

In summary, Arbasino often uses expressive punctuation to playfully break with the standard and perform syntactic fragmentation, as well as to allow values concerning intonation, rhythm, informative structure to emerge. On one hand, the unconventional use of punctuation has the function of switching attention from the content to an aspect of the form, consequently underlining the artificiality of the novel. On the other hand, punctuation mirrors the *mise en relief* of spoken language, in particular when in combination with nominal structures, with the aim of increasing the feeling of orality. These uses are in line with the general intention of breaking with the standard and performing a language that is close to orality seen in the previous sections.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion to the syntactic analysis of FI, it can be affirmed that this novel, in line with the previous works PV and RP, partakes fully in the tradition of experimental works, or in general works that break with the standard from a syntactic and stylistic point of view. The syntactic transgression of FI lies indeed in the horizontal expansion of the sentence, whereas the degree of complexity remains within the standard, just a little higher than works that programmatically choose *stile semplice*. Another typical feature of experimental works that has emerged in FI is the syntactic homogeneity of the diegetic and mimetic levels, in particular in the parts that share the same genre and functions, the monologues in the essayistic parts.

As far as stylistic choices are concerned, Arbasino chooses two categories to recreate realistically the world of the young intellectuals who are the protagonists of his novel: dynamic and static style. The feeling of fast change, frenzied moves, and contemporaneity is conveyed by a reportage style that draws its syntactic features from journalism and cinematography: lean and paratactic structures such as sequences of actions coordinated one to the other; high visual impact through the use of predicative nominal clauses often isolated and highlighted; fast accumulation of nouns through lists; use of non-finite subordinating clauses; and, although just mentioned in passing, use of present tense and deictics, which root the narration in the 'here and now'. On the other hand, the static nature of the monologues is suggested by long sentences internally expanded by series of nominal appositions, which help keep the degree of subordination low; and by the use of suspension points, mimicking a reflective and suspensive tone, blurring and loosening syntactic links between clauses.

Another element of realism in the novel is the informal *medio borghese* spoken language that informs both the diegetic and mimetic levels, narrative and argumentative text. Common traits are elliptical or brachilogic sentences, replacement of subordination with coordination, little variety of subordinating conjunctions and widespread use of the most common ones. The low frequency with which constructions of informal spoken Italian appear, such as *che polivalente*, testifies to the diastratic variety of the Italian used (*medio*

borghese); whereas cases of apocope of the infinitive, of infinitive+adverb (*venir su*, *venir giù*), of negation with *mica* and article in front of personal names point to a spoken Italian with Northern regional influences. Often, a spoken flavour emerges thanks to the prosodic comma, which signals the segmentation of the clause in informative units and the presence of an intonational border. Finally, orality surfaces also in the use of dislocations, cleft sentences, discourse markers, and deictics, some of which we have referred to at various points while analysing other syntactic features above. A whole section could have been dedicated to these features, but I decided not to for lack of space; a further study could highlight the strong contribution of these devices to the recreation of spoken language and their increase in FI compared to the previous work RP.

While the realist element is important, Arbasino's artistic project is also founded on modernist and structuralist premises and entails a vision of the work of art as parodic and playful mimesis of forms of reality. Reification is operated at all levels, thematic, structural and linguistic, and points to the self-reflexive and repetitive nature of literary discourse. From a syntactic point of view, many devices have been identified as relevant in conveying reification: in particular, parataxis, nominal style, and the device that combines the two, the list. Parataxis and linearity allow repetition, serialization and accumulation of clauses, thus the list-like form. Nominal style simplifies, reducing clauses to noun phrases (predicative nominal clauses), and objectifies, transforming actions, words, people into nouns (through nominalizations). Moreover, it is the style of journalistic writing and of many linguistic clichés of everyday *medio borghese* use (*il trionfo di*, *tutto un*, *con il suo*), therefore perfect to embody the reification and - through the repetition of the same structures and tics - the parodic treatment of language. Finally, the list, with its paratactic, a-hierarchical and levelling structure, serializes objectified language, similarly to what encyclopaedias or dictionaries do. In other words, lists represent in FI an encyclopaedia of conformist language, and their chaotic structure, clash of sounds and phonic games stand for the loss of meaning of that language. Their increase in the second half of the novel, when the topic of the Economic Boom is brought in more decisively, indicates that the language parodied is the new average Italian, the *lingua media* that, thanks to industrialization, better education and living conditions, is now accessible to the majority of Italians.

Ultimately, FI closes a cycle, that of Arbasino's early works, insofar as it constitutes a summa of the styles experimented in PV and RP, and possibly also in his journalistic experience to date, brought together under a precise artistic project. At the same time, it opens a cycle, that of Arbasino's writing maturity, with the subsequent works, *Super-Eliogabalo*, *Il principe costante* and *Specchio delle mie brame*, all pervaded by the poetics of quotation and by the latest literary theories. Still, FI remains a unique narrative creation, for its representation of the Boom from an upper middle class perspective, and for its capacity to capture and synthesize the spirit of the time.

6 Conclusion: Lines of Development of Arbasino's Syntax and Style

In order to understand the functioning of the most interesting and innovatory literary works, one must reconstruct the systems of norms they parody, resist, or disrupt.
Culler, *Barthes: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 66

Cioè, dirimpetto al lato dell'Accademia, dove il narratore 'puro' continua a sacrificare ogni 'scoria di lavoro' al noioso mito del récit 'ben fatto' (col suo 'capo', il suo 'plot', e peggio di tutto la 'coda', l'intollerabile pietra tombale del 'finale' conclusivo e retributivo ad ogni costo [...])
Arbasino, *Certi romanzi*, pp. 1178-79

This thesis has looked at Arbasino's early works from a very specific angle and within a particular time frame. One immediate conclusion is that there are many aspects that would admit of further exploration. As part of that, in the course of my analysis I have tried to highlight further possible directions for research in the linguistic field. For example, the analysis of the impact of deictics, discourse markers and other phenomena of segmentation of the sentence (dislocations, cleft sentences) on the recreation of spoken language could add further evidence concerning the increasingly oral style from PV to FI. Moreover, the lexical dimension of Arbasino's works is still waiting for an adequate analysis, in particular the lexis of FI, which is noticeably more idiosyncratic than PV and RP, meaning a thorough mapping of this aspect could add something about the stylistic development in the three works. Although Della Corte has provided a description of the most relevant lexical features of *La bella di Lodi* (foreign terms, regional terms, diminutives, etc.), which in most cases are also valid for FI, there are still wide margins of exploration, for example looking at authorial formations, such as compound nouns linked through hyphens (of the type 'dentro-e-fuori'). These are interesting features because they will be used extensively in Arbasino's subsequent work, *Super-Eliogabalo* (the title itself is telling), and they will also enter narrative writing in the following decades.¹

Another interesting field of analysis - only touched on in its syntactic aspect but that could be expanded to include also a narratological study - is reported speech. In several occasions, in PV and in FI, we saw that free direct speech and

¹ For their use in the narrative of 2000s, Maurizio Dardano, Gianluca Frenguelli, Gianluca Colella, 'Le parole della narrativa', in *L'italiano di oggi*, ed. by Maurizio Dardano and Gianluca Frenguelli (Rome: Aracne, 2008), pp. 149-71.

free indirect speech enter narration creating not merely a mixing of voices, but in some cases a chaos, since it is not clear who is speaking. In other occasions instead direct speech is introduced by *verba dicenda* accompanied by comments from the narrator on the way the utterance is performed, thus signalling a strong authorial control on the discourse of the characters. A further examination could clarify better the dynamics of the (apparent?) contrast between polyphony and authorial control in Arbasino's works, their effect on a verisimilar recreation of spoken language, as well as highlight differences and parallels with similar polyphonic and plurilingual works of those years.²

In addition, in terms of genetic criticism the reworkings of the three works examined remain partly unexplored. In almost all later editions of PV, RP (titled as *L'Anonimo Lombardo* after the first edition) and FI there are modifications, either minor or notable.³ Though there are some structural changes and further expansions for FI, which by its last edition had more than tripled in length, these are above all linguistic updates, reflecting the linguistic situation at the time they appeared. Still, up to now, only Cammarata has studied the 1993 rewriting of FI in any depth, bringing to light Arbasino's structural overhaul of the text, with the addition of further episodes and an entire new chapter inserted. Moreover, from a linguistic point of view, Cammarata underlines that Arbasino goes in the direction of a greater 'precisione linguistica e specificità lessicale', an enhanced recreation of orality, expanded use of dialogues. Listings figure more frequently, along with a higher degree of polyphony.⁴ A sample of the linguistic changes in *L'Anonimo Lombardo* is given instead by Raffaele Manica in the section *Notizie sui testi* of the *Meridiano Mondadori*, where he affirms that in the following editions 'si registrano varianti di tipo sintattico tese alla

² We can recall that Segre intentionally left Arbasino out of his study on polyphony and expressionism in twentieth century literature, stating: 'Arbasino meriterebbe un posto di tutto rispetto in questo studio e se non ce l'ha è perché le sperimentazioni formali non vogliono mai essere, nei suoi libri, uno sforzo di immersione nel reale, e nella realtà sociale. Il suo godibilissimo *verbiage* corrisponde a una costante parodistica quasi senza inflessioni'; Segre, 'Punto di vista, polifonia ed espressionismo nel romanzo italiano', p. 42.

³ PV has been re-published in 1971 by Einaudi and in 2007 by Adelphi; *L'Anonimo Lombardo* in 1966 by Feltrinelli, 1973 by Einaudi and 1966 by Adelphi; FI in 1967 by Feltrinelli, 1976 by Einaudi and 1993 by Adelphi.

⁴ Elisabetta Cammarata, 'Il rinnovamento dell'edizione '93', in in Martignoni, Cammarata, Lucchelli, *La scrittura infinita di Alberto Arbasino*, pp. 69-110 (pp. 97-106). We can also mention here the Stefano Bartezzaghi's study on the evolution of dysphemisms in the rewritings of FI: Stefano Bartezzaghi, 'Vaffanculo! Parolacce e cose da non dire nei *Fratelli d'Italia* di Alberto Arbasino', in *Alberto Arbasino*, ed. by Marco Belpoliti and Elio Grazioli, Riga, 18 (Milan: Marcos y Marcos, 2001), pp. 376-97.

semplificazione' and 'si va verso una maggiore adesione al linguaggio parlato e colloquiale'.⁵ These studies suggest that there is potentially material for further linguistic analysis of Arbasino's work, since it seems that on one hand there is a tendency to simplify syntax according to the general simplification of contemporary Italian, and on the other hand a tendency towards a greater expansion and accumulation. What seems clear is that Arbasino remains faithful over the years to the idea of the novel he conceived at the beginning of his writing career, since the action of re-writing implies that for him a work of art can never be really considered concluded and completed.

Any considerations regarding further avenues arise from what was possible to ascertain in the course of this research. As I suggested in the introduction, Arbasino's first works should be seen as a coherent development of the author's stylistic quest. The analysis has shown that they represent what we might label as the stylistic childhood, adolescence, and adulthood of the author. The short stories of PV embody Arbasino's quest for his own stylistic identity, pursued in opposition to literary trends of the preceding years and in general to literary tradition. Innovations reflective of the influence of literary modernism, cinema and journalism cohabit with options that testify to more traditional legacies. Various solutions are creatively explored, some of which are developed in subsequent works, while others are discarded. RP is the novel where one stylistic option is chosen - a syntactic excess that shows a decisive break with traditional narrative - and applied to the whole text. Contextually, Arbasino's artistic world view takes a more decisive shape and informs the narrative project, with its self-reflexive and citational drive. In FI the preceding stylistic tools are further developed and refined, connoting the main styles of the novel (dynamic/static), which are now harmonically integrated within one piece of work. The stylistic identity is fully mature, and inspired by a well-defined and highly personal poetics that is open to past and present stimuli.

The progression outlined is demonstrable in the syntax of the sentence, which has been the lens through which we have read Arbasino's works. In general, my

⁵ Raffaele Manica, 'Notizie sui testi', in Arbasino, *Romanzi e racconti*, I, 1429-1474 (p. 1442). I can additionally mention my *Laurea specialistica* dissertation on the evolution of erotic lexis in the rewritings of PV and RP: Debora Agazzoni, 'Dispositivi eufemistici e lessico interdetto nella narrativa del primo Arbasino', (unpublished master's thesis, University of Bologna, 2010).

data show that the degree of elaboration (length + composition) and complexity (subordination) is lowest in PV, where a certain type of experimentalism is still developing. This tendency reaches its peak in RP, where experimentalism is clearly apparent, and then in FI settles between the previous works (sometimes very close to PV), with a balance emerging with respect to earlier excess. We can see this summarized in the following graphs:

Table 6-1 – Length PV, RP, FI

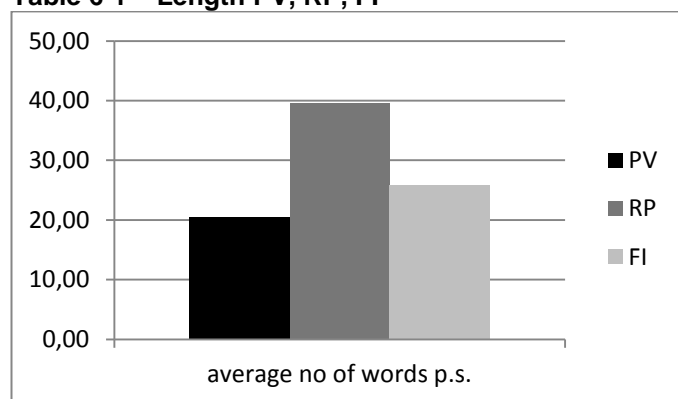


Table 6-2 – Composition PV, RP, FI

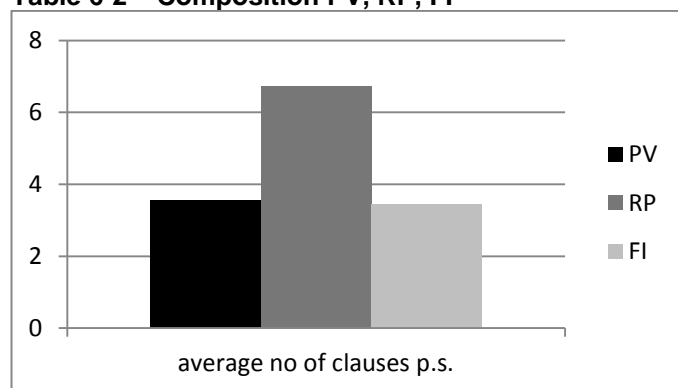
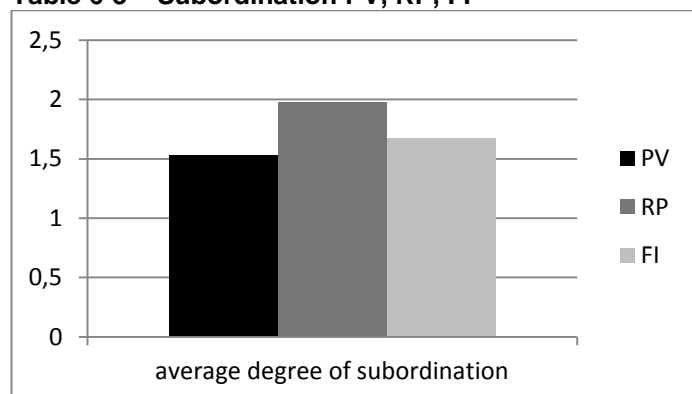


Table 6-3 – Subordination PV, RP, FI



Let us recapitulate more in detail what elements contribute to these data in the three works. In PV, the overall data are the result of very different syntactic

profiles in the stories, which in turn resulted in a variety of styles and suggested the labelling of the work as a ‘laboratory’. On the one hand, short and single-clause sentences, syntactic fragmentation, and nominal style keep syntax simple and not very elaborate. These parts correspond to the reportage style that will become one of the main techniques in FI. On the other hand, long and very long sentences dominate more syntactically traditional parts and the overflowing monologues present in some stories. These long sentences can reach some high levels of embedding, although are mostly based on parataxis: therefore, they increase both the average length and depth of the sentence. In this sense the average figures for PV in part conceal some peaks and troughs.

In RP the decisive increase in elaboration (especially) and complexity derives from the choice of one style, the monologue, used both in the narrative and in the argumentative parts of the text. As in the case of PV, these monologues are characterized by very long sentences mostly structured paratactically but with some high levels of embedding, a situation that we defined as ‘rich linearity’, which determines the peak of elaboration and complexity in the data. Moreover, the experimental dimension is fostered by devices that disrupt linearity and impede a smooth reception of the text, such as parentheticals and fragmenting punctuation.

Finally, in FI there emerges the re-use and refinement of structures present in both PV and RP: first of all, the reportage style, made up of short sentences and of an enhanced use of nominal style, but also featuring the new presence of long lists and long sentences with a dynamic parataxis. These increase the average length and composition of the sentence with respect to PV but have less of an impact on the degree of subordination, since lists and ‘dynamic’ sentences are fundamentally paratactic structures. Secondly, we find the overflowing monologue, which has long sentences as in RP, but less complex, because they are, again, mainly structured on parataxis (static parataxis). In comparison with RP, FI tends to simplify the sentence while keeping it long, a trend that I have labelled as ‘simplifying in order to accumulate’.

The study of the syntax of the sentence has allowed the emergence of three key markers of experimentalism in Arbasino’s works. The first one is the atypical syntactic profile that we have just seen visualised in the graphs. While there is

some evidence for a progressive simplification of the language deployed in those years, put into place by some authors in the rewritings of their works in order to achieve a closer approximation to *lingua media*, Arbasino's works do not show the same progressive simplification, rather they break with this trend.⁶ Indeed, the comparison of data of Arbasino's works with those of other contemporary works written in *lingua media* has shown that the length and complexity of Arbasino's sentences exceed those found in works in *lingua media*. In fact, PV, RP and FI get closer - in different degrees, reflecting the development seen in the graphs - to works that systematically break with the standard, such as those of Gadda, Volponi and Manganelli.

It should be added though that, like these experimental works, only the length of the sentence in Arbasino's works exceeds the standard of contemporary Italian, whereas the complexity is in line with it, that is, the average degree of subordination remains within the second degree in all three works (as we can see in table 6-3 above). This is achieved by using structures that are very common in contemporary Italian, namely the coordination of blocks of independent+subordinate clauses and the coordination of subordinates.⁷ The difference is that in Arbasino these linear structures are expanded in length, with the addition of more blocks or more subordinates. These structures are present in all three works, escalating from PV to FI: in PV they are in selected parts of the stories, where long sentences appear, above all in the diegetic level. In RP they are mostly in the narrative parts of the text, while in FI they are found at all levels, in diegesis and mimesis, and in both narrative and argumentative parts.

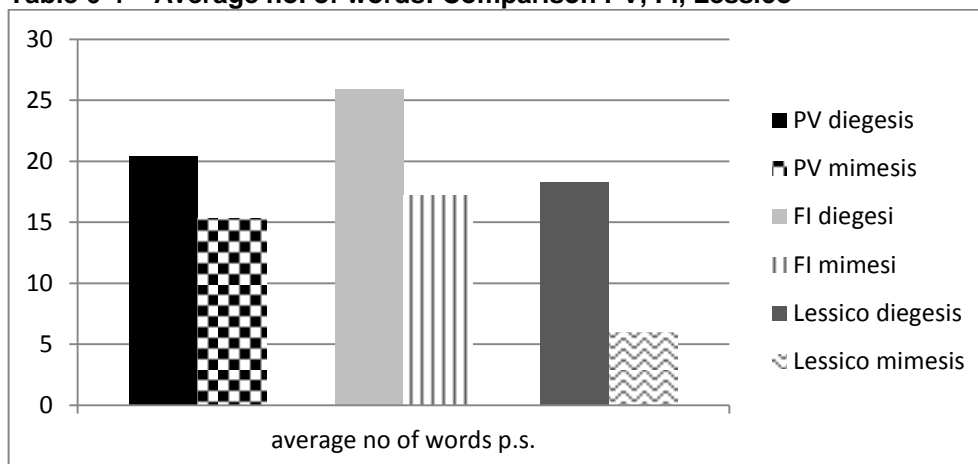
Another important experimental feature is the tendency to merge the diegetic and mimetic levels, in order to create an uninterrupted discourse where the language of the narrator and that of the characters are almost identical. We saw

⁶ I am referring to the simplification of syntax and to the reduction of literary language and dialect performed by writers contemporary to Arbasino (Bassani, Cassola) in the rewritings of their works. Ignazio Baldelli, 'Verso una lingua comune: Bassani e Cassola', in Ignazio Baldelli, *Varianti di prosatori contemporanei (Palazzeschi, Cecchi, Bassani, Cassola, Testori)* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1970), pp. 46-75.

⁷ We can recall here what Tesi affirms: 'l'italiano contemporaneo preferisc[e] costrutti più lineari composti da due o più principali coordinate che controllano ciascuna una o due subordinate; [...] le subordinate controllate da una stessa proposizione principale tend[o]no a coordinarsi tra loro, facendo così scendere il livello d'incassatura medio al primo o al secondo grado di subordinazione'. Tesi, 'Una fase ancora aperta: l'italiano contemporaneo', p. 230.

that the mimetic level in PV and FI often presents only a slight reduction in elaboration and complexity compared to the diegetic level. This is noticeable when we compare data from the diegetic and mimetic levels of Arbasino's works with those of a work in *lingua media* such as *Lessico familiare*, for example the average length of the sentence in the following graph:

Table 6-4 – Average no. of words: Comparison PV, FI, Lessico



It is clear that between *Lessico* diegesis and *Lessico* mimesis there is a wider gap than between PV/FI diegesis and PV/FI mimesis. The closeness of the two levels in Arbasino's works leads increasingly, from PV to FI, to an average length for mimesis that exceeds the averages for spoken language in real private and informal situations. The comparison with data from a corpus of real spoken language has repeatedly highlighted how data from PV and FI were closer to formal and public situations, such as university lectures. This is especially apparent in the length and composition of the sentence, whereas the degree of subordination is closer to that of real informal spoken situations, confirming a tendency to create long but not complex sentences also on the mimetic level. In particular, both in PV and FI diegetic and mimetic levels appear very similar in monologues, where long and fundamentally paratactic sentences dominate. The difference being that in PV monologues are concentrated in just one story, while in FI they can be found throughout the novel.

A third distinctive experimental trait visible from the point of view of syntax is the alternation of narrative and essayistic parts in RP and FI, and the different stylistic profiles that emerge within them. Syntactically, it has been observed that the essayistic parts contain longer sentences and exhibit higher degrees of

subordination in both levels. However, in RP the difference between narrative and essayistic parts is more pronounced than in FI, since essayistic passages are characterized by more typically written features, such as a higher number of subordinates, which contribute to the greater complexity evident in RP relative to other works. In FI instead the essayistic passages are more similar to the narrative ones: they still have longer sentences, but the complexity is reduced thanks to the use of more linear syntactic structures. The sense of written style diminishes in FI, replaced by a spoken flavour that renders the essayistic and narrative parts more homogeneous. This, added to the similarity that exists between diegetic and mimetic levels, makes FI the work where syntax is most uniform, merged at all levels by a layer of *parlato* (the *romanzo-conversazione*).

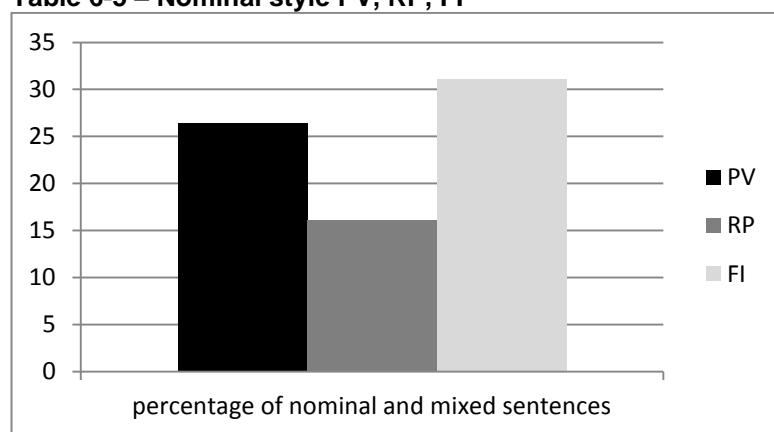
The recreation of spoken language is indeed an increasingly relevant aspect in the style of Arbasino's early works that can be detected at the level of the syntax of the sentence. This time it is not only a prerogative of experimental works, but of the Italian narrative of those years in general, although the aims can vary according to whether the work is in *stile semplice* or if instead tends towards experimental styles. In all Arbasino's works we find almost the same devices for the recreation of *parlato*, yet with a different incidence. In general, it is in FI that a harmonic and coherent recreation of *medio borghese* informal spoken language is reached in every part of the novel (mimetic/diegetic, narrative/essayistic), whereas in RP and PV this happens only in selected parts.

In PV hints of *parlato* emerge in diegesis in the on-the-spot report and in the overflowing monologue; these parts are however contrasted with others featuring elements of traditional literary Italian. On the mimetic level, direct speech is reported with different techniques, some more successful than others in terms of recreation of spoken language. Since Arbasino is trying to avoid using dialogues, the most frequent technique is the quotation within narration, where however the recreation of typical features of *parlato* is restricted most of the time by the limited number of lines available. More convincing spoken results come from the monologues and from passages in free direct and free indirect speech in reportage, but in PV they are still infrequent. In the narrative parts of RP syntax helps to convey in a realistic way the impression of an uncontrolled and unplanned spoken confession, written as it is uttered (appropriate to the epistolary form). On the other hand though, as we have said above, in the

essayistic parts the written nature surfaces more clearly, since the syntactic carelessness is replaced by tighter syntactic links between clauses.

In FI the recreation of *parlato* is instead evident from a syntactic point of view at all levels. In diegesis, reportage becomes a dominant stylistic mode with an enhanced presence of nominal style compared to PV, and a consequent effect of greater concision and rapidity. A more frequent ‘intrusion’ of free direct and free indirect speech in narration further contributes to the accentuation of an oral character in this work. Furthermore, as we have seen, the monologues in the essayistic parts are characterized by a more spoken character than those of RP. The mimetic level of FI sees the presence of monologues - which have basically the same structure as those in diegesis - and of dialogues. Compared to quotations in PV, the dialogues in FI are a far more credible recreation of spoken language in syntactic terms: they follow closely the configuration of real dialogues and also include interactional discourse markers, fillers, and vocatives, which reinforce the impression of orality. However, just as in the extremely long monologues of the essayistic parts, here too the representation of direct speech is not totally mimetic, since Arbasino still displays authorial control. Indeed, what Arbasino aims at in all three works is not a truthful mimesis of spoken language (as in Neorealist works), or an introduction of spoken elements for a more natural and direct communication (as in works in *stile semplice*), but an artistic recreation of the accelerations, pauses, and interactive nature of *parlato*, with a growing parodic aim from PV to FI.

The syntax of the sentence has been our main focus, but not the only one. Other devices that can impact on syntactic organization have been examined, and assessed in their contribution to the various discursive styles that compose Arbasino’s works and in their diachronic development. The first one is nominal style. Nominal style is a key feature in the construction of both lyrical prose and reportage, and as such it appears mainly in PV and FI. The following graph will help us visualise the line of development:

Table 6-5 – Nominal style PV, RP, FI

The percentage is high in PV, where reportage is starting to appear, and where nominal style is used frequently in more traditional ways. We then see a drop in RP, where neither a literary style nor reportage are used, to return more insistently in FI, where reportage is one of the main styles of the narrative parts. In general, the qualitative analysis has shown that in PV and RP we find in embryo devices that will be fully exploited in FI. In PV we observe among traditionally literary uses of nominal style the birth of more contemporary uses and of stylistic features, such as the lists. Although present with just a few examples, lists already convey the impersonality, objectivity and visual impact - what we defined as a journalistic and cinematographic stamp on syntax - that will characterize these devices in FI. Similarly, in RP nominal style can have both more traditional and more 'authorial' uses, such as nominalizations and lists. Nominalizations are quite rare in RP, and they do not make the decisive contribution to syntax they will make in FI, yet they already point to the objectification of stereotypical language, which is one of the core aspects of Arbasino's poetics. Also lists are rare, orderly and short in number of items, thus quite different from the proliferation evident in FI, yet we can identify the possibility of their expansion - as they will be in FI - in the suspension points or in the 'etcetera' that closes them.

In FI nominal style is undoubtedly one of the main stylistic - and syntactic - features. Having abandoned those devices linked with literary tradition, Arbasino in this novel uses devices inspired by contemporary means of expression such as journalistic writing and cinema and by modernist writers. These are the key elements for the construction of the lean, dynamic and 'visual' syntax of the reportage, and are visibly more frequent than in PV or RP. Nominal style is also a

powerful tool that displays Arbasino's *realismo critico*, the poetics that informs the narrative creation of FI at all levels. Nominalizations and other nominal constructions isolate and highlight stereotypical expressions of everyday *medio borghese* language. They are no longer single examples as in RP, rather they are constantly repeated throughout the novel as linguistic tics of the narrator himself, transforming FI in an encyclopaedia of commonplaces that points at the repetitive and banal nature of language and reality. Lists bring this aspect to extremes. In FI they are not only more frequent than in the previous works, but also longer and more articulated in their structure: they perform a chaotic accumulation of objectified language, where linguistic signs are deprived of meaning and can be used for playful sound experiments, ultimately showing the conformism and loss of meaning of language.

Besides nominal style, punctuation is another aspect that showed a diachronic progression with consequences for syntax and style. Coherently with the syntactic development, we have observed in PV the birth of uses of punctuation that recreate the rhythm of orality or contribute to the fragmentation of the sentence, mostly confined to the parts of overflowing monologues and reportage. In RP we have found a more logical-syntactic punctuation in the essayistic parts, alongside uses that more markedly deviate from grammatical norm and reveal the citational drive. In FI there is a more diffuse and stable presence of uses seen in the previous works, in particular of those pointing to fragmentation, disruption of expectations and spoken character. As in RP, the citational element is present, and amplified by the higher occurrences of 'unconventional' punctuation marks.

A third syntactic device to which I devoted some attention is parenthetical clauses. However, a section on parentheticals only appears in the case study on RP, since in PV and FI their use is not as remarkable as in this novel. The higher presence in RP is in line with the exhibited experimentalism of this work, since most of the parenthetical clauses found contribute to the expansion in length of the sentence. Moreover, they represent an element of disorientation and estrangement for the reader, because they tend to disrupt the syntactic and semantic progression of the sentence, inserting a digression or another point of view. In some cases, they even indicate the self-reflexive game played in the novel (i.e. the presence of different narrative levels) or include quotations from

other works. Thus, as in the case of nominalizations and colons, in RP parentheticals are the devices used to point to the reification of literature within the text, and therefore to introduce us to the poetics of *realismo critico*.

The decade 1954-1964, from the writing of the short stories of PV to the publishing of *Certi romanzi*, not only represented Arbasino's stylistic search, but also a quest for literary models and for a personal artistic world view. As we have seen in the first chapter, at the base of this quest there is a profound dissatisfaction with Neorealist modes of representation, and an interest in modernist authors as well as in new disciplines and critical approaches born abroad. In PV we have observed that this view influenced the first-person narrator, the attempt of merging diegesis and mimesis through an undifferentiated monologue, the elimination of dialogues. Yet, in this work the reification of literature and language remains still very subtle, embodied by the quotation of other works in titles or in selected parts of the text, and by the occasional presence in the stories of a character who is also a writer.

In RP the attack on Neorealism is instead accompanied by a clearer turn in the direction of metanarration and quotation. Critical realism has not been theorized yet, but it has started to take shape as a theory that - inspired by Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet* - sees the work of art as a parodic and playful mimesis of forms of reality, including language and literature. Hence, the quotations from other works placed as footnotes to the text, the discussion about the Italian literary and cultural situation within the work itself, and the frequent *mise en abyme*, which constantly highlight that for Arbasino the object of literature is literature, and that literary language can only parody what has already been written. As we have seen, some syntactic devices - parenthetical clauses, nominalizations and colons - are now 'in charge' of communicating the citational play.

With FI the battle against traditional literary modes of representation continues, and the poetics of *realismo critico* is formulated more fully, enriched by structuralist methods. Compared to RP, self-reflexivity and objectification are less immediately visible: for example, quotations are now absorbed into the text. In reality though they are more intense and pervasive, in particular the objectification of language, of that *lingua media* (in its *medio borghese* variant)

that in these years is becoming the common language of Italians and of narrative. Through the constant re-use of linguistic tics, often chaotically listed in never-ending catalogues that end up being no more than a playful clash of sounds, Arbasino foregrounds the conformism, lack of expressivity and even of meaning characteristic of that language. Unlike in PV and RP, now syntax fully contributes to the artistic project: the wide use of paratactic structures, including lists, combined with the systematic use of nominal style devices is what allows the objectification of language.

Looking at the results just outlined, it is possible to affirm in conclusion that syntax gradually achieves a greater role in Arbasino's refinement of his own style and in the construction of his literary project, to the point that some syntactic devices have become typical stylistic features of his writing. Finally, in a sort of meta-reflexive bid on my own research, it might be reasonable to ask whether Arbasino's works, born during the development of structuralism and using structuralist methods within the works themselves, did not implicitly call for an analysis that could be measured and described with scientific precision. In other words, I am left with the doubt that ironically, by making syntax - that is, the structure of the language - the object of my thesis and by quantifying syntactic elements, I have basically played the same game Arbasino plays in his works, reifying literary and everyday language and by assigning to the structure of the work the meaning of the work itself.

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