

# An 'Improper Medium' for Memory: Exploring a Recent Case of Memory Remediation

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## GENOA 2001 AS A GENERATIONAL METONYMY

According to the sociological literature on the subject,<sup>1</sup> the Global Justice Movements (GJM), of which the Genoese case of 2001 is a leading example, do not homogeneously represent a generation. The term 'social movement' refers to 'a network of individuals, groups and organizations that, based on a sense of collective identity, seek to bring about social change (or resist social change) primarily by means of collective public protest'.<sup>2</sup> The composite nature of GJM does not allow for the identification of a clear shared ideology. As recently restated by Alessandro Barile<sup>3</sup> we can more reliably identify a dominant interpretative framework that identifies the objective of the protest in a radical opposition to international market organisations (WTO, G8, IMF, etc.).

The protest in Genoa in 2001 (from 16 to 22 July) took the form of a counter-summit (the *World Social Forum*) concomitant to the G8 meeting, with the aim of formulating a counterproposal to the global economic policies discussed by the eight market powers gathered at the Ducal Palace in the city centre. The last three days of protest were marked by violent clashes between demonstrators and police, resulting in numerous injuries and the death, on Friday 20th, of the activist Carlo Giuliani in Piazza Alimonda, killed by a

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<sup>1</sup>The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective, ed. by Stefan Berger, Holger Nehring, (Sirger, 2017); Donatella della Porta, The Global Justice Movement. Cross-National and Transnational Perspectives (Routledge, 2007); The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements, ed. by Donatella Della Porta and M. Diani (Oxford University Press, 2015); M. Andretta, D. della Porta, L. Mosca, H. Reiter, Global, nonglobal, newglobal. La protesta contro il G8 a Genova (Laterza, 2002).

<sup>2</sup>Diechter Rucht, 'Social movements. Some conceptual challenges', The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective, ed. by Stefan Berger and Holger Nehring, pp. 39-62.

<sup>3</sup> Alessandro Barile, La protesta debole. I movimenti sociali in Italia dalla Pantera ai No Global (1990-2003) (Mimesis, 2024), pp. 138-9.

police officer's gunshot. The protest movements, which aimed to challenge globalisation and the decisions of the G8 summit, were met with intensified security measures and repression by the police, culminating in particular in the raid on the Diaz school which was being used to accommodate activists (on Saturday 21) and the torture in Bolzaneto prison of some detained demonstrators (on Sunday 22). Amnesty International described the Genoa events as the most serious violation of human rights in a democratic country since the Second World War.

Returning to the point we started from, the GJM cannot be defined as a generational movement in strictly sociological terms.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the labour movement, the global justice movement was marked by significant generational heterogeneity, bringing together participants from different age groups and social backgrounds while attempting to connect distant national and cultural contexts. At the same time, the major mobilisations of the GJM did record a noticeable increase in youth participation. While this demographic prominence does not in itself suffice to define the movement as generational, it contributed to the perception of a renewed political protagonism of younger activists. For this reason, the generational dimension of the GJM cannot be established on purely sociological grounds. This difficulty reflects the broader complexity of constructing a collective identity in movements that lack a homogeneous social base. Rather, it becomes recognisable through a narrative operation: the texts examined here engage in a dialectical process that sketches the outline of a generation, isolating shared traits and constructing a framework within which a generational memory can be articulated.

Our contribution focuses on the recent literary production of Massimo Palma,<sup>5</sup> an Italian contemporary writer, academic, and scholar of Walter Benjamin, Eric Weil, and Alexandre Kojève. Specifically, we will discuss *Happy Diaz. Sette giorni di gioia e divisione a Genova 2001* (Arcana 2015)<sup>6</sup> and *Olanda 1945, Anne Frank e i Neutral Milk Hotel*

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<sup>4</sup> Cfr. M. Andretta, D. della Porta, L. Mosca, H. Reiter, *Global, noglobal, newglobal*, pp. 74-77

<sup>5</sup> Palma's literary production includes *Desiderare Bowie* (Nottetempo, 2025), *La conta* (Edizioni volatili, 2024); *Olanda, 1945*, (Nottetempo, 2023); *Movimento e stasi* (Industria & Letteratura, 2021); *Nico e le maree* (Castelvecchi, 2019); *Happy Diaz. Sette giorni di gioia e divisione a Genova 2001* (Arcana, 2015); (Castelvecchi, 2021); *Berlino Zoo Station* (Cooper, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Our contribution examines the second edition (Castelvecchi, 2021) published for the twentieth anniversary of the Genoa demonstration.

(Nottetempo, 2023). The first explores how the troubled memory of the G8 in Genoa can be approached and narrated through the musical culture of the generation involved in those tragic events in July 2001. On one hand, Palma's narrative operation is pertinent in light of its clear political endeavour to redeem the ideals belonging to that generation and transfer them into contemporary political discourse. On the other hand, it is justified by the author's observation of an absence of work on the memory of those years that has not been crystallised in the form of trauma. According to Palma what appears to be the particular object of removal is what the author calls the 'before Genoa'. The author refers to the dual formation ('la duplice formazione'), both political and musical, of those who took part in the World Social Forum. In the second book Palma shows how, in the same time period, precisely in 1997, the *Neutral Milk Hotel's* indie rock masterpiece *In the Aeroplane over the Sea*, which offers a re-reading of Anne Frank's *Diary*, gradually achieved international success, becoming a generational voice. Palma perceives *In the Aeroplane over the Sea* as a 'generational essay' that describes a segment of alternative American youth through a reshaping of Anne Frank's legacy.

The essay will situate Palma's texts within the theoretical framework of cultural memory studies. We aim to show how Palma's work represents a literary example of the construction of a generational narrative that is still neglected, despite the strong media coverage of the events in which it was involved. In particular, our contribution develops an understanding of cultural memory and memory remediation based on the theoretical approach defined by Astrid Erll. We will start by clarifying the term 'collective memory' of Genoa. We will then explicate what we mean by 'remediation' and how it can be used to renew a narrative of the G8 protest. Here, we will refer to José Van Dick's concept of 'digitally mediated memory' particularly in relation to the musical medium. Finally, in the last section, we will analyse the texts, attempting to describe the concept of 'improper medium', introduced by Palma, in order to use it as an interpretative tool.

Before proceeding, a preliminary remark is necessary. The concept of generation is not easy to describe. Identifying a generation is possible through a multifactorial analysis including demographic, historical and cultural data. Moreover, consensus among researchers plays an essential role.<sup>7</sup> The two works examined focus on two different historical and geographical contexts (England-Italy; United States-Netherlands), but the

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<sup>7</sup> For a summary, refer to the methodological articles published by the Pew Research Centre, such as, The Whys and Hows of Generations Research, Pew Research Center, September 3, 2015, <<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2015/09/03/the-whys-and-hows-of-generations-research/>> [accessed 28 May 2025].

generation under discussion is the same: the so-called Generation Y or Millennials (1981-1996). Despite recent criticism of the indiscriminate use of these labels, Generation Y and the chronological boundaries that define it remain compelling.<sup>8</sup> From an Italian cultural perspective, authors whose literary works focus on this generation share identity-shaping episodes that occurred within the same general time frame. For example, Valerio Mattioli recently chose two events as temporal limits on his ‘cultural counter-history of the 1990s’:<sup>9</sup> the failed eviction of the Leoncavallo social centre in Milan (August 16, 1989) and the killing of Giuliani in Genoa (September 11, 2001). In contrast, the choice of chronological boundaries in Palma is subject to wider fluctuations between a national and an international horizon. The author recognizes two generational ‘dates of birth’, as he says, in Aldo Moro’s death (May 9, 1978) and in Ian Curtis’ death (May 18, 1980). The leader of the Italian party *Democrazia Cristiana*, who was kidnapped and killed by the *Brigate Rosse*, is described as a symbol of a generation’s political background. What is more, the suicide of Joy Division’s frontman Ian Curtis comes to represent that generation’s musical education and cultural legacy. We will return to this issue later.

On the other hand, the Genoa events in July 2001 would constitute the opposite temporal limit, ‘the date of death’. Both Mattioli and Palma depart from the more established historical milestones, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the attack on the Twin Towers. Mattioli justifies his choice as a matter of ‘counter-history’ that cannot subscribe to the dominant narrative. Instead Palma identifies September 11 as a competitive memory to the Genoa events on the media level. September 11 (‘che ha inghiottito quasi tutto’)<sup>10</sup> is the historical contingency that removed Genoa from the collective debate. Both, on the contrary, recognize Genoa as a generational metonymy, the symbol that geographically anchors their generation. It is Palma who explicitly uses the term ‘Genoa Generation’ and having clarified the chronological extremes to which he refers, we will adopt his definition for the sake of clarity in our argument.

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<sup>8</sup> On debates over generational labels see How Pew Research Center will report on generations moving forward, Kim Parker, May 22, 2023, <<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/05/22/how-pew-research-center-will-report-on-generations-moving-forward/>> [accessed 28 May 2025].

<sup>9</sup> Valerio Mattioli, *Novanta*, (Einaudi, 2025), p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Palma, *Happy Diaz*, p.7.

Palma opens his reflection on Genoa's generational trauma with the cover of *Closer*, Joy Division's second and posthumously released album (July 1980), which inevitably reads as an elegy following Curtis' suicide. The album cover image reproduces a funerary monument from the Monumental Cemetery of Staglieno in Genoa, the very cemetery where Giuliani is buried. In Palma's interpretation, this visual coincidence becomes symbolically charged: both generations, Curtis' Manchester-based generation and the Genoese generation marked by the events of the G8, found themselves represented in mourning. From this starting point, Palma rewinds the week of the Genoa protests to 1981, the year of the release of *Movement*, the first album by New Order, founded by the former members of Joy Division after Curtis' death. He interprets that record as a collective act of mourning. In doing so, Palma internalizes as a metaphorical framework through which to rethink Genoa's generational wound.

### THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF GENOA 2001

In the framework of memory studies, when we talk about memory as a collective phenomenon, we refer to the dual logic of collective remembering and collective forgetting within a given social context. As recently remarked by Erll, the term 'collective memory', although tautological, is part of a tradition dating back to 1925, to Maurice Halbwachs' pioneering text *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* that renewed a field of study clarifying that memory is always shaped within social frameworks. As Jan Assman summarises, recalling the achievement of Halbwachs' approach, 'our memory depends, like consciousness in general, on socialization and communication' and it 'can be analyzed as a function of our social life'.<sup>11</sup> In saying this, in the words of Erll, collective remembering 'means that certain versions of the past are actualised again and again within social groups (via discourses, media, practices), and that they are well-networked with other topics'.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, collective forgetting 'means that within certain social frameworks, there are no acts of

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<sup>11</sup> Jan Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* ed. by Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning (De Gruyter, 2008), pp.109-118.

<sup>12</sup> Astrid Erll, 'The hidden power of implicit collective memory', *Memory, Mind & Media* 1, 14, (2022), pp. 1-17, (p. 3).

remembering traceable. For example, memories of particular past events can be avoided, kept secret, tabooed, or may seem difficult to articulate in public'.<sup>13</sup>

This terminological specification not only clarifies the interpretative key that guides our analysis, but also has another function. Most books about the G8 protests in Genoa are collections of testimonies or testimonial writings by people who were present at the events.<sup>14</sup> It is common to encounter the term 'collective memory' in these texts. However, behind the homonymy lie two different meanings that we believe should be pointed out before continuing. The term 'collective memory', as used in these texts and reported by testimonies, should be read in a political sense, referring to an explicitly politicized notion of memory work.<sup>15</sup> The expression 'Genoa collective memory' alludes to a broad political consensus from below, in contrast to the journalistic and institutionalised narrative of the protests. Gabriele Proglia, echoing Halbwachs, talks about 'uno sguardo sul passato dall'interno del gruppo di appartenenza',<sup>16</sup> which characterises the oral testimonies of the protesters, recounted most often from within a collective horizon. The institutional version and the media vulgate of the G8 counter-demonstrations are contrasted by a memory that claims to be collective, conveyed through the use of the subject 'we'.

Now, we build on the concept of collective memory by showing the relationship that the Genoa generation has with remembering and forgetting. Once again, we find Mattioli and Palma's considerations quite aligned. They seem to agree in identifying as common to a generation, a discontinuous relationship with recent national history and a contradictory engagement with memory. Both read as a generational trait, a deep connection with the historical events of the 1970s, the so-called *Anni di piombo*. This legacy is frequently discussed and according to Barile<sup>17</sup> the Italian social movement has a cautious attitude

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>14</sup> See: Gabriele Proglia, *I fatti di Genova. Una storia orale del G8* (Donzelli, 2021); Gianluca Prestigiacomo, *G8. Genova 2001. Storia di un disastro annunciato*, (Chiarelettere, 2021); Raffaele Caruso, *G8 c'ero anch'io: un avvocato tra le barricate di Genova*, (FOG, 2021); Vittorio Agnoletto et al., *2001-2021. Genova per chi non c'era. L'eredità del G8: il seme sotto la neve*, (Altreconomia, 2021).

<sup>15</sup> Cfr: *Social Movements, Cultural Memory and Digital Media*, ed. by Samuel Merrill et al., (Palgrave Mcmillan, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> Gabriele Proglia, *Mitopoiesi del G8 di Genova*, *Laboratoire italien*, 31, 2023, <<https://journals.openedition.org/laboratoireitalien/10993>> [accessed 12 novembre 2025].

<sup>17</sup> Barile, *La protesta debole. I movimenti sociali in Italia dalla Pantera ai No Global (1990-2003)*, pp. 138-139.

towards that recent history, neither rejecting nor embracing it. The symbolic role of the protests of the 1970s is played between memory and oblivion. In this regard, Mattioli offers an interpretation that views the 1970s and 1990s as a continuum of his Italian counter-history, in which the former represent both a cumbersome legacy and a founding myth.

In Palma, in parallel with similar observations made by Mattioli, the reflection goes further by explicitly asserting an intentional component in the dynamics of forgetting of his generation. As stated in *Happy Diaz*:

Il rapporto di questa generazione con la storia, con il passato, è stato contraddittorio: responsabili e sollecitati da più parti, si sono ricordati di tutto, grandi eventi e biografie personali, metanarrazioni e storia micrologica di travet misconosciuti. Ma di sera, spesso, si sono dimenticati di ricordare.<sup>18</sup>

Palma seeks to clarify the contradiction 'forget to remember' passing through a new formative date for the Genoa generation. On July 2000, a day of remembrance was established in Italy for the remembrance of Holocaust victims. Since that year, the 27th of January has been designated as *Il giorno della memoria*. According to Palma, the generation that arrived in Genoa in their twenties is also the first that questioned the warning 'ricordati di ricordare'.<sup>19</sup>

The thematisation of the Holocaust memory in terms of a generational identity-shaping feature is crucial in Palma's narrative. Similarly, choosing the death of Joy Division's leader as a symbolic generational limit is closely connected to the Shoah. Following the fourth chapter of *Happy Diaz*, Palma recalls how reading *House of Dolls* by Ka-Tzetnik (Yehiel Feiner) suggested to Ian Curtis the band's name *Joy Division*. He chose the English translation of *Freudenabteilung*, a term referring to a section of the Auschwitz concentration camp where young Jewish women were subjected to sexual slavery. In Rothberg's influential work on the interplay of disparate acts of remembrance involving the memory of the Holocaust, he asserts that 'public memory of the Holocaust emerged in relation to postwar events that seem at first to have little to do with it'.<sup>20</sup> His spatial

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<sup>18</sup> Palma, *Happy Diaz*, p.14.

<sup>19</sup> Ivi, p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Michel Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford University Press, 2009), p.7.

metaphorical concept of multidirectional memory moves beyond a competitive view of memories in public discourse.

We believe that in Palma the reference to the Holocaust is directed at focusing on the memory-making process per se, referring to the institutionalised mnemonic act par excellence. This also means showing the trade-off and coming to terms with the moments when forgetting is sought. Palma interprets the absence of work on the memory of the G8 primarily as a traumatic reaction and secondarily as a symptom of a generational cultural problem with memory.

### **'DARE AZIONE AL RICORDO'" GENOA 2001 BETWEEN PREMEDIATION AND REMEDIATION**

In order to construct a memory that adequately records the events of the Genoa counter-demonstration, Palma intends to rethink both political and personal trauma in terms other than identification or witnessing. He aims to move away from what he identifies as two automatisms of memory. If the first one is a moral automatism ('il senso di colpa per non esserci stati'),<sup>21</sup> the second one concerns the historization and iconization of past events ('nomi e scene del passato possono diventare icone').<sup>22</sup> The G8 of Genoa, as a strongly mediated event, easily lends itself to this second dynamic. The first automatism does not allow emotional detachment from the recalled episode, the second one problematises the common compulsion to remember, creating fixed portraits of past events.

Visuality, as remarked by Erll, plays a crucial role in the making of collective memory: 'iconization is, along with narrativization, a key process of forming memory in culture'.<sup>23</sup> In our case, the memory of the G8 protests is crystallised in the figure of Giuliani, captured in the moments before and after his death during the clashes in Piazza Alimonda. There are two images that have been reproduced most often and have come to epitomise a week

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<sup>21</sup> Palma, Happy Diaz, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Astrid Erll, 'Media and the Dynamics of Memory: From Cultural Paradigms to Transcultural Premediation', *Handbook of Culture and Memory* ed. by Brady Wagoner (Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 313.

of protests. This is how Palma introduced them in *Happy Diaz's* chapter dedicated to Friday events:

E infine, su migliaia di frame, di fermo immagine, scomposto tra fotografie di privati, di mediattivisti, infine su YouTube, è apparso un corpo minuto, bicolore, bianco e quasi-nero. Era disteso e circondato da gente in fuga, poi venne coperto da un telo.<sup>24</sup>

C'è una foto famosa di Carlo Giuliani fermo su via Tolemaide, piccolo ma statuario, un rotolo di scotch da pacchi all'avambraccio, indossato come fanno i bimbi.<sup>25</sup>

In relation to the first image Palma speaks of 'generational framing' to emphasise how much an image can fix a memory. Instead, in the second one, a 'generational style' emerges: 'Dalla foto, nella perfetta staticità di Giuliani emerge lo stile generazionale. Una calma critica, una stasi riflessiva nel movimento assoluto, nel caos'.<sup>26</sup>

To these two automatisms Palma contrasts an alternative capable of giving action to memory. It consists of what he calls 'a musical perspective'.

Happy Diaz voleva e vuole ancora essere [...] un invito a percorrere ragioni e radici di quel movimento [...]. Cerca di farlo da una prospettiva straniante. Una prospettiva musicale [...]. Parte proprio da venti anni prima: il 1981 in cui nascono ufficialmente i New Order [...]. E prende le mosse da un luogo altro: l'Inghilterra [...].<sup>27</sup>

The expression 'musical perspective' is not purely metaphorical. It means, first of all, considering the musical culture of the people involved in the Genoa protest. As clearly stated by van Dijck, who investigated the relationship between modern digital media and collective memory, 'popular songs create a context for reminiscence'<sup>28</sup> and shape collective memories of the past. And also, thanks to van Dijck, the function of collective music repertoires (playlists) as vehicles for imagining collectivity has been highlighted. The case of Palma differs from the examples provided by van Dijck, who focuses on the national heritage of pop songs, providing an example on a transnational level.

In Palma, following a musical perspective means working comparatively, creating new mnemonic connections and finally, using a well-established term in the field of memory

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<sup>24</sup> Palma, *Happy Diaz*, p.77.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>28</sup> José van Dijck, *Mediated memories in the digital age* (Stanford university press, 2007), p. 90.

studies, remediating. *Premediation* and *Remediation* are defined by Erll as two complementary dynamics of cultural memory.<sup>29</sup> In her words:

[...] while remediation describes the ongoing transcription of mnemonic content from medium to medium, premediation draws our attention to the result of such plurimediated memories: the emergence of certain media schemata, which preform the ways in which future events will be anticipated, experienced, represented, and then possibly remembered.<sup>30</sup>

To provide an example, we can look to the *Happy Diaz*' index. Palma states that he derived the week-long timeline narrative device from G. K. Chesterton's book, *The Man Who Was Thursday*. This is overlaid with references to the popular 1990s television series *Happy Days*, onto which the tragedy of the Diaz school is grafted. Palma also does not hide biblical symbolism linked to the weekdays from Genesis and the Gospels, which also derive in part from Chesterton. To these previous media formations, which already form a complex pattern of intermedial relationships, Palma adds a musical component. A large number of songs performed in Manchester are juxtaposed with the days of the week. We list only the title of the song that inspires each chapter, leaving the others aside: Monday = *Blue Monday* (New Orders); Tuesday = *Tuesday* (The Durutti Column); Wednesday = *Just Wednesday* (Inspiral Carpets); Thursday = *Thursday's Child* (The Chameleos); Friday = *Gramme Friday* (The Fall), *Friday Mourning* (Morrissey); Saturday = *Madchester Rave On* (Happy Mondays); Sunday = *Everyday is like Sunday* (Morrissey).

This juxtapositional practice, which achieves remediation at a macrostructural level, is a process that we also find at work on a microstructural level. Returning back to the figure of Giuliani, we can see the cultural resonance of previous representation reverberating across different media. The paragraph discussing his iconic significance is titled after the song by *The Associates*, *Tell Me Easter on Friday*. The song makes explicit reference to the religious and sacrificial dimension of Friday for Christianity. This symbolic context is consistent with the frame description of the two hands succouring Giuliani through the

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<sup>29</sup> Regarding this point, see: Erll, 'Media and the Dynamics of Memory: From Cultural Paradigms to Transcultural Premediation', *Handbook of Culture and Memory* ed. by Brady Wagoner (Oxford University Press, 2017); *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (De Gruyter, 2008); *Memory in culture* (Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2011), pp. 139-143.

<sup>30</sup> Erll, *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, pp.13-14.

reference to the personification of piety: 'Immagini mute, in sosta sul fiotto di sangue che si spande, e finalmente due mani, la piet , che tentano di fermare quel flusso'.<sup>31</sup>

In conclusion, it is difficult to identify a distinctive feature of remediation through musical elements (title-tracks, performers' biographies, etc.). What can, however, be emphasised is a similarity of process between the logic that guides associationism in *Happy Diaz* and that which van Dijck states underpins the logic of creating music playlists. In her words:

The eminent value of creating collective musical repertoires, as American historian William Kenney points out, has proved vital to the "ongoing process of individual and group recognition in which images of the past and present could be mixed in an apparently timeless suspension that often seemed to defy the relentless corrosion of historical change".<sup>32</sup>

#### OF NAMES AND DATES WITHOUT A YEAR: A CONCLUSION

In *Olanda, 1945*, Palma dwells mostly on musical remediation, recognising in Neutral Milk Hotel's album a significant alternative to iconisation, even though the band interfaces with the icon par excellence: Anne Frank. Palma writes:

In quel disco il compositore e paroliere del gruppo, Jeff Mangum, racconta che ci si pu  innamorare di un ritratto, di una foto di Cinquant'anni prima: il soggetto della foto   Anne Frank. E racconta cosa succede a farlo in musica. Le conseguenze e i cambiamenti che porta.<sup>33</sup>

A subsequent passage reads:

dopo che le poche foto rimaste di Anne Frank sono state riprodotte a milioni, nella favola dell'*Aeroplano sopra il mare* Anne Frank non esiste come volto, sfuma come icona. Diventa suono e melodia senza immagini a supporto [...]. Non d  mai una descrizione del ritratto amato, e non pronuncia il nome di Anne Frank se non una volta.<sup>34</sup>

According to Palma, Neutral Milk Hotel (NMH) build a generational identity through the reuse of Anne Frank's memory and her diary. The approach adopted by NMH does not rely on philological methods to guide associations ('Non c'  filologia n  uso di archivi').<sup>35</sup> The bridges between epochs are drawn by following emotional affinities in

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<sup>31</sup> Palma, *Happy Diaz*, p.77.

<sup>32</sup> Van Dijck, *Mediated memories in the digital age*, p. 95

<sup>33</sup> Palma, *Olanda, 1945*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

particular on issues related to adolescence. Palma focuses more closely on what may be, namely, a kind of ‘inappropriateness’ of these associations. The figure of Anne Frank, appropriated by NMH, is defined by Palma as an ‘improper medium’. The meaning of the expression lies in the ambivalence between ‘medium’ understood as ‘media-related’ and as a ‘spiritual conduit’. In Palma’s words:

Anna Frank diventa il tramite attraverso cui fare musica nella periferia americana dei Novanta. Il medium per narrare la vita materiale di comunità ai margini. È un medium improprio.<sup>36</sup>

This paragraph most closely resembles a definition. The author clearly defines Anne Frank as a ‘means’ or ‘vehicle’ through which an identity narrative can be shaped. However, the semantic sphere that mostly revolves around the figure of Anne Frank is that relating to ghosts. See the following passage in this regard:

Farsi possedere dagli spettri: questa è la chiave con cui i Neutral Milk Hotel, ragazzi degli anni Novanta, quando si proclama finita la storia e la storia stessa diventa fantasma, decidono di fare musica della vicenda di Anne Frank. [...]. L’Aereo ha il problema di dare una casa allo spettro di Anne Frank.<sup>37</sup>

Palma appears to define the ‘improper medium’ as a concept situated halfway between these two dimensions: at once a medial and a spiritual one. However, ‘improper medium’ seems to work following a multidirectional logic, exemplifying what Rothberg describes as ‘new kind of comparative thinking’ that ‘produces new objects and new lines of sight’.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, memories that are used in a contrastive manner in relation to other elements of an identity-shaping narrative can be defined as ‘improper medium’. This form of elaboration of mnemonic material in Palma has a stylistic counterpart. The author privileges juxtapositions through argumentative writing and thus highlights the destabilising potential of coincidences - deemed essential tools for an effective reimagining of generational memory. Let’s conclude by looking at one last example from *Sebaldivision*, the last chapter of *Happy Diaz* included in the book’s second edition:

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 90-92.

<sup>38</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, p. 18.

Sebald morì in Inghilterra per un attacco di cuore che lo colse alla guida nel dicembre 2001, pochi mesi dopo aver pubblicato *Austerlitz*. Nell'ultima pagina di *Austerlitz*, ricorda l'uso che venne fatto di una fortezza. L'ultimo nome è "Max Stern, Paris, 18.5.44". Se Parigi è il luogo in cui si svolge tutto il finale di *Austerlitz*, se il 18 maggio 1944 è il giorno in cui è nato, Max è il nome con cui Sebald voleva essere chiamato. [...] Mentre la sua vita si conclude pochi mesi dopo, improvvisa, nel 2001, la sua vita d'autore finisce appena prima con una mossa punk. Nella data iscrive il nome, Sebald. Il suo dentro il loro. Vi innesta l'eco della distruzione causata dai suoi contro loro. E la speranza, solo per noi, decenni dopo, per quando ci vedremo come non ci era mai accaduto, come "ritratti del trauma". Per scrivere nomi e date senza anno: "Max Stern, Ian Curtis, Manchester, 18.5=".<sup>39</sup>

Here, the author creates a strong connection between Ian Curtis' death and some episodes from W. Sebald's life by working on the recurrence of a couple of dates, May 17 and 18. The author in this chapter builds a juxtapositional parable that solidifies in memory Manchester and the Shoah. As Palma points out in the note to the second edition, the chapter *Sebalddivision* is included in the book, not so much because it explicitly refers to Genoa, but rather because of a stylistic affinity that ties in with the issues raised by the memory of Genoa. In his words: '[*Sebalddivision* n]on ha un'attinenza diretta a quanto successo nel luglio 2001, ma ha molto a che vedere con l'uso di giustapposizioni e coincidenze che domina *Happy Diaz* e col problema che la memoria di Genova 2001 apre a chi c'era e chi non c'era'.<sup>40</sup> The problem with Genoa's memory, as we said, is the iconic significance of the traumatic event it represents, which cancels out what preceded it on a political and cultural level. At the same time, iconization ('ritratti del trauma') does not allow for the redeeming of those ideals; yet it leaves open the question of how they might be reclaimed in future political practice. Through juxtaposition of elements, Palma reveals how recreating memory means 'scrivere nomi e date senza anno', following a model such as 'Max Stern, Ian Curtis, Manchester, 18.5=''. Rejecting names, dates, or spatial coordinates once again emphasizes how, with Erll, 'remembering and forgetting are closely intertwined'.<sup>41</sup> She continues: 'the phenomenon of forgetting is every bit as unobservable as is memory. As an object of research it only comes into view via the observation of remembering – by considering its peculiarities, mistakes and changes'.<sup>42</sup> Deliberately embracing forgetting, Palma constructs a new narrative, one that reinterprets and rearticulates generational trauma. In this regard, he states that his generation embodies repetition at concerts ('si incarnava la ripetizione')<sup>43</sup> in order to forget everyday life ('Le

<sup>39</sup> Palma, *Happy Diaz*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>41</sup> Erll, *Memory in culture*, p.8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.94.

allusioni ad una velocità che aiutava a dimenticare il quotidiano').<sup>44</sup> Questioning the injunction to remember which, as we have seen, was central to this generation and is here evoked through one of the authors who most prominently thematized it (W. G. Sebald), Palma reveals the possibility of an alternative warning ('forget to remember'). By engaging in contrastive mnemonic relationships within an identity-shaping narrative, Palma's work not only enables the reimagining of generational memory but also opens up a political horizon, understanding memory as a site of negotiation.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.60.