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**The Phoenix Speaks: The Reclamation of
Socio-Political Engagement in the Works of
Leonardo Sciascia and Antonio Tabucchi,
1975-2005**

by

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Italian**

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This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of my Grandfather, Christopher Arthur Wren, 1924-2006.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work, and that its contents have not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Revised sections of chapter 2.3., 'Representations of Geographical and Border Spaces in Tabucchi's Texts', have been published as 'Engagement through Geographical and Border Spaces in Tabucchi's Texts', in *Arachnofiles*, 3 (Spring 2004), and revised sections of chapter 2.2., 'Representations of Geographical and Historical Space in Sciascia's Texts', have been accepted for publication as 'Un cambiamento microscopico: Microstoria e spazio storico concettuale negli ultimi romanzi storici di Sciascia', in *La forma del Passato*, ed. by Laura Rorato (Bern: Peter Lang, forthcoming).

Abstract

This thesis represents the first comparative study of Leonardo Sciascia and Antonio Tabucchi. It examines their literary engagement with socio-political concerns in a climate coloured by the scepticism and uncertainty of postmodernism and post-structuralism. This thesis seeks to counter current literary criticism, which suggests that engagement in Tabucchi's writing is confined to certain key texts, and to instead show that committed writing underpins all of his work, including texts currently held to deal solely with literary concerns. Previous research asserts that Sciascia's work aims to engage with society, often employing the anachronistic term *impegno* to describe his writing. This thesis seeks to examine the ways in which Sciascia's engagement counters the political and literary challenges which led to the collapse of *impegno* by the 1970s.

The thesis is structured in five parts. Part one charts the course of committed writing from the post-war era to its problematization during the 1950s and 1960s. It examines the relevance of Sciascia, Tabucchi, and the importance of 1975 as a starting point for this study. It goes on to explore direct engagement with specific events in their writing, and their employment of fictional lenses to factual writing. Part two examines ways in which the writers use the representation of geographical, historical and border spaces to engage with society. Part three considers ways in which Sciascia and Tabucchi view notions of uncertain truths and the inability of language to fully communicate ideas, as means of strengthening, rather than undermining, engagement. Part four investigates ways in which intertextuality, another barrier to engagement, is used by the two writers to dialogue with society as well as with literature. Part five studies the value with which Sciascia and Tabucchi imbue literature, as compared to journalism, and assesses the extent to which they view literature as a valid means of engagement.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout this thesis:

Leonardo Sciascia, *Opere 1956-1971*, ed. by Claude Ambroise (Milan: Bompiani, 2001), is abbreviated as *I*.

Leonardo Sciascia, *Opere 1971-1983*, ed. by Claude Ambroise (Milan: Bompiani, 2001), is abbreviated as *II*.

Leonardo Sciascia, *Opere 1984-1989*, ed. by Claude Ambroise (Milan: Bompiani, 2002), is abbreviated as *III*.

Part 1:

Text and Society: Text in Society

1.1 Introduction

This thesis represents the first comparative study of Leonardo Sciascia (1921-1989) and Antonio Tabucchi (1943-). It focuses on the ways in which the two writers engage with society through their texts, and on the means through which they assert a belief in the value of literature as a tool for understanding and for acting in the contemporary world. The thesis builds on the valuable but limited studies on Tabucchi's writings to offer a radically different interpretation of engagement in Tabucchi's work. Previous research has suggested that Tabucchi's texts may be divided into different strands, which either address socio-political concerns or which concentrate solely on postmodernist debates such as ontology, multiplicity or division of the subject. In her recent monograph, *L'uomo inquieto: Identità e alterità nell'opera di Antonio Tabucchi*, Pia Schwarz Lausten suggests that the divided subject and the search for the other underpins all of Tabucchi's writing.¹ Flavia Brizio-Skov's earlier monograph, *Antonio Tabucchi: Navigazioni in un arcipelago narrativo*, suggests that *rovescio* represents the underlying theme of Tabucchi's writing, and she acknowledges the presence of engaged writing only in Tabucchi's 1994 text, *Sostiene Pereira*, and his 1997 text, *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro*.² Recent articles and chapters written on Tabucchi have also examined the committed writing of *Sostiene Pereira* and *La testa*, viewing these texts as separate from Tabucchi's other writings, which

¹ Pia Schwarz Lausten, *L'uomo inquieto: Identità e alterità nell'opera di Antonio Tabucchi* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2005).

² Flavia Brizio-Skov, *Antonio Tabucchi: Navigazioni in un arcipelago narrativo* (Cosenza: Pellegrini, 2002).

examine more literary and ontological themes.³ This thesis counters such readings of Tabucchi's texts, to suggest that socio-political commitment underpins all of Tabucchi's works, and that the themes pinpointed by other critics as divorced from engagement in fact represent a different yet powerful form of committed writing.

Critics have long recognised that a belief in literature as a means of engaging with society underscores Sciascia's writing, and much of the critical analysis of Sciascia's texts makes a passing reference to *impegno*. Texts such as Adamo Liborio's *Leonardo Sciascia: Tra letteratura e impegno* do not however unpack the term *impegno*, or question the extent to which it is an appropriate term to employ from the 1970s onwards.⁴ As yet no research has been published which examines the ways in which Sciascia's commitment faces and overcomes the obstacles posed to notions of *impegno* during the 1950s and 1960s. Incisive works have been published, which examine Sciascia's texts through the prism of a genre or a theme in his writing, and which comment on aspects of his engagement. Francesca Bernadinin's edited volume, *Leonardo Sciascia: La mitografia e la ragione*, Massimo Onofri's *Nel nome dei padri: Nuovi studi sciasciani* and Ricciarda Ricorda's *Pagine vissute: Studi di letteratura italiana*

³ Bruno Ferraro, 'Letteratura e impegno in *Sostiene Pereira* di Antonio Tabucchi', *Narrativa*, 8 (1995 July), 157-72; Angela M. Jeannet, 'A Matter of Injustice: Violence and Death in Antonio Tabucchi', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 19 (2001), 153-69; Jennifer Burns, *Fragments of Impegno: Interpretations of Commitment in Contemporary Italian Narrative 1980-2000* (Leeds: Northern Universities Press, 2001), pp. 61-80. In addition to her insightful reading of *Sostiene Pereira* and *La testa*, Burns also suggests that Tabucchi's representation of the underclass may be usefully viewed as an extension of Vittorini's concept of 'il mondo offeso'. My own, very different, reading of the importance of the underclass, and the underworld which they inhabit, is explored in chapter 2.3. of this thesis, 'Representations of Geographical and Border Spaces in Tabucchi's Texts'.

⁴ Adamo Liborio, *Leonardo Sciascia: Tra letteratura e impegno* (Enna: Papiro, 1992).

del novecento represent fascinating studies of Sciascia's dialogue with other writers, at times hinting towards ways in which such dialogue may have a pedagogical value.⁵ Anne Mullen's chapter on 'Leonardo Sciascia's Detective Fiction and Metaphors of Mafia' offers a perspicacious study of Sciascia's use of detective fiction to engage with the problem of the mafia, and Ruth Glynn's recent analysis of the Italian historical novel illustrates Sciascia's commitment in an early historical novel, *Il Consiglio d'Egitto*.⁶ Despite their very real value, these studies are necessarily limited by their specificity to a certain genre or a single text. On the other hand, monographs such as Massimo Onofri's comprehensive *Storia di Sciascia*, or Joseph Farrell's excellent *Leonardo Sciascia*, seek to touch upon all aspects of Sciascia's vast opus.⁷ Although these texts address the notion of commitment, they do not unpack or analyse his methods of engaging in a sustained and critical manner. This thesis seeks to fill such a gap in scholarly research, offering a framework in which to examine the different manifestations of socio-political engagement in Sciascia's various forms of writing, in a climate informed by the doubts and scepticism of postmodernism.

⁵ Francesca Bernadini, ed., *Leonardo Sciascia: La mitografia e la ragione*, (Rome: Lithos, 1995); Massimo Onofri, *Nel nome dei padri: Nuovi studi sciasciani* (Milan: La vita felice, 1998); Ricciarda Ricorda, *Pagine vissute: Studi di letteratura italiana del novecento* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1995), pp. 153-191.

⁶ Anne Mullen, 'Leonardo Sciascia's Detective Fiction and Metaphors of Mafia', in *Crime Scenes: Detective Narratives in European Culture Since 1945*, ed. by Anne Mullen and Emer O'Beirne (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 88-99; Ruth Glynn, *Contesting the Monument: The Anti-Illusionist Italian Historical Novel* (Leeds: Legenda, 2005), pp. 43-60. Other particularly useful studies of Sciascia's historical fiction include Carlo Boumis, 'Strategie della retorica e pedagogia falsa nella *Strega e il Capitano*', in Bernadini Napoletano, *La mitografia e la ragione*, pp. 175-203; *Leonardo Sciascia e il Settecento in Sicilia: Atti del Convegno di studi, 6 e 7 dicembre 1996*, ed. by Rosario Castelli (Caltanissetta-Rome: Salvatore Sciascia, 1996).

⁷ Massimo Onofri, *Storia di Sciascia* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1994); Joseph Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

This thesis is structured in five parts. The first part seeks to locate Sciascia and Tabucchi in the traditions of committed writing, and then to analyse the ways in which they comment directly on current affairs, through both fictional and non-fictional texts. It examines the literary prisms adopted by both writers in their non-fiction and challenges the perception that their fiction and non-fiction may be considered as separate entities. Part two examines the ways in which the representations of space in the texts of Sciascia and Tabucchi engage with society. The thesis details the changing depiction of Sicilian space in Sciascia's writing, from a real, geographical space, to an empty metaphorical space and finally to a spatial representation which lies somewhere between the two extremes, and seeks to root such a pattern in the changing socio-political framework. The thesis locates Sciascia's portrayal of historical space in the debates of microhistory and charts the representation of historical space against a backdrop of socio-political events. Part two also examines a shift in Tabucchi's representation of geographical and border spaces, and suggests that such changes respond to debates surrounding Italy's place in Europe, internal tensions exacerbated by the rise of the *Lega Nord*, and by immigration. Parts three and four analyse the means through which Sciascia and Tabucchi draw on arguments which on the surface appear antithetical to engagement, and use them to reinforce their commitment. The representations of a de-centred truth, and interplay with the notion that language cannot fully express ideas, are examined in part three, whilst part four details the roles of dialogue, intertextuality and self-reflexivity in Sciascia's and Tabucchi's texts. Part five examines the values with which

Sciascia and Tabucchi imbue journalism as opposed to literature, and assesses the importance which the two writers ascribe to literature as a means of engagement.

Parts three and four suggest that Sciascia and Tabucchi further their engagement through the very issues which challenge and undermine *impegno* during the 1960s. Such different forms of commitment necessitate a distinction between Sciascia's and Tabucchi's engagement and the *impegno* championed by post-war writers in Italy. This introduction will examine the notions of commitment outlined by early practitioners of *impegno*, and their subsequent rejection of commitment in the light of the issues which challenged *impegno* during the 1950s and 1960s. The introduction will propose that Sciascia's continued dialogue with contemporary affairs from the 1970s onwards indicates that he is more usefully studied in relation to Tabucchi, who also engages with society in a culture influenced by the uncertainties of postmodernism, than in relation to his contemporaries Calvino (1923-1985) and Pasolini (1922-1975), who reject literature as a valuable form of engagement during the 1960s and 1970s. The introduction will suggest that Tabucchi, as well as Sciascia, represents a particular and unique intellectual who stands apart from his contemporaries, and will also outline the significance of 1975 as a starting point for this study.

Post-war belief in literature

Surveying the role of the intellectual in Italy from the Middle Ages to the end of the twentieth century, David Ward argues that 'the history of Italian intellectuals' attempt to exert an influence over Italian society is a history of gallant well-

intentioned effort, but above all a history of failure'.⁸ Although the success of intellectuals in influencing society may have been no greater in the years immediately following the Second World War than during any other period, the post-war era is marked by a new-found belief that writing could influence the shape and the direction of post-fascist Italy.⁹ Guido Bonsaver defines the three major characteristics of the neorealist writing which emerged in the wake of World War Two as:

a) the exploration of the reality of Italian society - particularly the crude reality of working class life affected by unemployment, poverty and deprivation; b) a clear social and often political commitment, on the parts of writers and directors, that turned those works into powerful moral pictures of Italian society; c) as its name suggests, the preferred narrative technique was that of realism, that is, a naturalistic approach which would emphasize the representational, documentary value of the work.¹⁰

Lino Pertile stresses the centrality of this second element, known as *impegno*, arguing that the primary aim of the neorealist writers was 'to sow amongst the people the seeds of a social awareness which in turn, it was thought, would bring about a radical renewal of society'.¹¹ In the aftermath of fascism and of war, writers believed that literature could (and indeed should) help to fashion a

⁸ David Ward, 'Intellectuals, Culture and Power in Modern Italy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Rebecca J. West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 81-96 (p. 81).

⁹ Ward suggests that even in the postwar period the impact of committed writing was limited, as writers aligned closely with the *Partito comunista italiano (PCI)* focussed on 'high' culture, which alienated vast swathes of the population (although offering valuable new opportunities to a minority) (Ward, 'Intellectuals', pp. 83-91). This view is reiterated by Stephen Gundle in 'The Legacy of the Prison Notebooks: Gramsci, the PCI and Italian Culture in the Cold War Period', in *Italy in the Cold War: Politics, Culture & Society 1948-1958*, ed. by Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff (Oxford: Berg, 1995), pp. 131-47 (pp. 142-43).

¹⁰ Guido Bonsaver, *Elio Vittorini: The Writer and the Written* (Leeds: Northern Universities Press, 2000), p. 120.

¹¹ Lino Pertile, 'The Italian Novel Today: Politics, Language and Literature' in *The New Italian Novel*, ed. by Zygmunt Barański and Lino Pertile (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 1-19 (pp. 6-7).

blueprint for a new society. Gramsci had argued that the lack of shared experience between writers and readers made it hard for literature to engage with the need for change in Italy, writing

non esiste, di fatto, né una popolarità della letteratura artistica, né una produzione paesana di letteratura 'popolare' perché manca una identità di concezione del mondo tra 'scrittori' e 'popolo', cioè i sentimenti non sono vissuti come propri dagli scrittori, né gli scrittori hanno una funzione 'educatrice nazionale', cioè non si sono posti e non si pongono il problema di elaborare i sentimenti popolari dopo averli rivissuti e fatti propri.¹²

The experience of the Resistance, in which Italians from all walks of life had developed a close bond of communication as they worked for a common goal, offered an unprecedented opportunity for writers to live the same experiences as the reader, and to use literature as an agent for change. Calvino outlines this belief in the 1964 preface to his neorealist novel *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (first published in 1947); a preface which in many ways serves as a post-dated manifesto for the neorealist programme. Calvino writes that:

l'essere usciti da un'esperienza – guerra, guerra civile – che non aveva risparmiato nessuno, stabiliva un'immediatezza di comunicazione tra lo scrittore e il suo pubblico: si era a faccia a faccia, alla pari, carichi di storie da raccontare, ognuno aveva avuto la sua, ognuno aveva vissuto vite

¹² Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere: Volume terzo, Quaderni 12-29*, ed. by Valentino Gerratana (Milan: Einaudi, 1977), p. 2114 (Q 21§ 5). For fuller consideration of Gramsci's concept of the role of intellectuals, see Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere: Volume primo, Quaderni 1-5*, ed. by Valentino Gerratana (Milan: Einaudi, 1977), especially *Quaderno 3*; Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere: Volume terzo, Quaderni 12-29*, especially *Quaderno 21*; Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, trans. by William Boelhower (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985); Paul Ransome, *Antonio Gramsci: A New Introduction* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 179-200; David Ward, 'Intellectuals', pp. 87-89. Gramsci's notions of 'national popular literature' and the role of the 'organic intellectual' were open to different interpretations, partly due to the fragmentary nature of the *Quaderni*. Subsequent editing of the *Quaderni* allowed the PCI to privilege certain elements, as Stephen Gundle explores in 'The Legacy of the Prison Notebooks', pp. 131-47.

irregolari drammatiche avventurose, ci si strappava la parola di bocca. La rinata libertà di parlare fu per la gente al principio smania di raccontare.¹³

The implicit trust between writer and reader facilitated the writers' aim of fashioning a new civil society, a new Italy. Such a belief was shared by many writers of the period, and in her analysis of three key neorealist writers, Jennifer Burns asserts that:

Vittorini, Calvino and Pasolini all convey a powerful sense that reality was somehow palpable at that historical moment; that the problem of creating a truly representational literature was suddenly attenuated, as the filters of class and cultural experience which had stood firm between intellectual and public suddenly seemed to have been removed. (Burns, *Fragments*, p. 15)

The post-war climate afforded new possibilities for writers to engage with and to influence society in a meaningful and powerful fashion.

Opinions as to the exact form that this *impegno* should take varied between writers, but they were united in their belief in literature as an agent of change.¹⁴ Vittorini expresses this certainty in his *Diario in Pubblico*, suggesting that engagement is inherent in a writer:

io nego che uno scrittore (o un pittore, un musicista) possa impegnarsi a lavorare in un senso piuttosto che in un altro, e poi averne qualche risultato valido. Uno sforzo velleitario, da parte sua, non coinvolge, al più,

¹³ Italo Calvino, *Presentazione*, in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (Milan: Mondadori, 1993), pp. v-xxv (p. vi).

¹⁴ Burns outlines the differing positions of Vittorini, Calvino and Pasolini in *Fragments*, pp. 13-37. She defines Vittorini as a strategist, for whom *impegno* involves discovering the place of literature within culture, the place of culture within society and then the promotion of culture as an inclusive and multi-referential area of exploration in which all classes of society can participate, moving towards the goal of self-fulfilment. She suggests that Calvino may be seen more as a creator, who believes that *impegno* involves producing models of rational human activity within the literary text, which might then function as the blueprint, or at least the inspiration, for individual action within society and which may serve the common good of all social groupings. Pasolini, Burns argues, is a stylistician, for whom *impegno* is a matter of expression, of discovering and re-discovering the forms of expression used by social groups conventionally excluded from cultural recognition and of promoting the use and the appreciation of such forms.

che il suo intelletto e non fa che accentuare il lato 'intellettualistico' della sua arte [...]. Ma c'è un engagement 'naturale' che agisce in lui al di fuori della sua volontà. Gli viene dall'esperienza collettiva di cui egli è spontaneo portatore, e costituisce, segreta in lui stesso, l'elemento principale della sua attività. [...] Nell'engagement naturale [...] l'artista contribuisce alle trasformazioni della realtà.¹⁵

This notion is reiterated seven years later in Calvino's 1955 essay, 'Il midollo del leone', in which Calvino declares that:

noi crediamo che l'impegno politico, il parteggiare, il compromettersi sia, ancor più che dovere, necessità naturale dello scrittore d'oggi, e prima ancora che dello scrittore, dell'uomo moderno. Non è la nostra un'epoca che si possa comprendere stando *au dessus de la mêlée*, ma al contrario la si comprende quanto più la si vive, quanto più avanti ci si situa sulla linea del fuoco [...] Noi pure siamo tra quelli che credono in una letteratura che sia presenza attiva nella storia, in una letteratura come educazione, di grado e di qualità insostituibile.¹⁶

Calvino's faith in literature as a form of socio-political engagement faltered in the years following 1955.¹⁷ His responses to the key challenges facing *impegno* are charted in *Una pietra sopra*, a collection of Calvino's essays drawn from 1955-1978. Despite the clear limitations inherent in viewing the course of *impegno* through the lens of one writer, this text offers a valuable means of navigating changing attitudes towards socio-political engagement, as well of course as painting a portrait of Calvino-scrittore.

¹⁵ Elio Vittorini, *Diario in Pubblico* (Milan: Bompiani, 1957), pp. 347-49. Vittorini expressed these ideas at a conference in Geneva in August 1948.

¹⁶ The essay 'Il midollo del leone' was first published in *Paragone*, 66 (June 1955) and is reproduced in Italo Calvino, *Una pietra sopra: Discorsi di letteratura e società* (Milan: Mondadori, 1995), pp. 5-22 (pp. 15-17). The text was first published in 1980.

¹⁷ Burns suggests that his belief in literature had been shaken even by 1955, arguing that his declaration in 'Il midollo del leone' rings hollow as a mere two years later he published *Il barone rampante*, in which the protagonist lives in the trees and is literally '*au dessus de la mêlée*' (Burns, *Fragments*, p. 21).

The challenges facing *impegno*

Three causes are generally seen to have undermined the notion of *impegno* and the neorealist movement: the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956; the economic boom; and changes in the literary environment, which saw a shift away from political themes towards non-political themes and towards linguistic experimentation.¹⁸ From the immediate post-war period, *impegno* was linked to the *PCI* and to a socialist vision of Italy's future. Although the extent to which the *PCI* exercised any level of influence over the writers has been brought into question, the shared reforming vision was clearly left-wing.¹⁹ Following the Soviet invasion of Hungary, many Italian intellectuals (including Calvino) distanced themselves from the party and were alienated from the communist project.

Socialist reforming zeal was also undermined by the economic boom which occurred in Italy during the 1960s.²⁰ As the working classes became increasingly content with their lot, the desire for revolutionary change faded into the background. Calvino expresses his revulsion at this new material culture in his 1959 essay 'Il mare dell'oggettività' (*Una pietra sopra*, pp. 47-54). He writes that:

¹⁸ Burns (*Fragments*, pp. 26-27) stresses the importance of linguistic experimentation, whereas Pertile ('Italian Novel Today', p. 7) emphasizes a re-emergence of non-political themes such as the psychological, the fantastical and the sentimental.

¹⁹ See David Ward, 'Intellectuals', pp. 83-91. Bonsaver examines the tensions between Vittorini and the *PCI* leadership concerning artistic freedom and party orthodoxy, in Bonsaver, *Vittorini*, pp. 120-23.

²⁰ This is generally perceived as reaching its peak between 1958-1963, as Paul Ginsborg argues in *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 210-53. Martin Clark takes a wider view, positing that the boom lasted from the late 1950s to the late 1960s in *Modern Italy 1871-1995* (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 345-53.

la resa all'oggettività, fenomeno storico di questo dopoguerra, nasce in un periodo in cui all'uomo viene meno la fiducia nell'indirizzare il corso delle cose [...] perché vedo che *le cose* [...] *vanno avanti da sole*, fanno parte d'un insieme così complesso che lo sforzo più eroico può essere applicato al cercar di aver un'idea di come è fatto, al comprenderlo, all'accettarlo. (p. 50, italics in text)

Burns suggests that Calvino's opposition to this new material culture is intellectual rather than moral, since he is concerned at the lack of individual control as the intellectual becomes subsumed into society, indistinguishable from the masses.²¹ As such, the writer loses his privileged position and his capacity to direct social change.

David Ward suggests that it is the complacency of the working classes following the boom which pushed artists towards literary experimentation and towards a focus on language and literature as the elements which shape consciousness and perception. Ward writes that:

if language was one of the vehicles for the bourgeois codes which had conditioned the working class, it was only by revising those codes that the preconditions for change could be created. This conclusion had radical consequences: intellectuals no longer needed the working class as a direct ally. They were free to carry out their work independently; and the kind of writing encouraged was of a far more experimental nature than the Neorealist texts sanctioned by the PCI - a kind of writing, in fact, that had little meaning for a mass readership. ('Intellectuals', p. 91)

By challenging a language enmeshed in the ideology of the bourgeoisie, the *neo-avanguardia* could challenge reality in a way in which the neo-realist texts could not. The nucleus of experimental writing in Italy lay in the *Gruppo 63*, which focused on writing which systematically debunked traditionalist forms. The group, which lasted from 1963-67, included Nanni Balestrini, Renato Barilli,

²¹ Burns, *Fragments*, p. 23.

Umberto Eco, Angelo Guglielmi, Francesco Leonetti and Edoardo Sanguineti.

The movement defined itself as a reaction to the 'falsa coscienza' of *impegno*, and Barilli and Guglielmi outline the main concept of the group as being that:

l'azione, anche intesa nel senso più pregnante e dinamica, estesa cioè fino al momento rivoluzionario, deve cominciare a trovarsi *dentro* il linguaggio, il quale non serve né come "specchio" di contenuti predeterminati, né come eco consolante dei tormenti psichici individuali.²²

The linguistic experimentation of the *neo-avanguardia* was distanced from a mass readership, and directly challenged the notion of a close dialogue between reader and author as championed by the practitioners of *impegno*.

As a result of these challenges, even the architects of *impegno* began to question the notion of socio-political engagement through literature. Calvino's 1964 preface to *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* consigns neorealism and *impegno* to a very specific historical moment (the years immediately following the war), a period so distant that 'tutto è lontano e nebbioso' (*Il sentiero*, p. xxv). In 1967 Calvino develops this notion of the historicity of *impegno* even further, in his essay 'Per chi si scrive? (Lo scaffale ipotetico)' (*Una pietra sopra*, pp. 193-98). In the essay, Calvino responds to Gian Carlo Ferretti's open question 'per chi si scrive un romanzo? Per chi si scrive una poesia?'.²³ Calvino responds that a book should be written to form part of a bookshelf, to dialogue with other written texts. The crucial error of neorealism, he suggests, was to seek to make written texts dialogue with a socio-political project rather than a literary framework:

²² Renato Barilli and Angelo Guglielmi, *Gruppo 63: Critica e teoria* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), p. 17 (italics in text).

²³ Ferretti's question appeared in *Rinascita*, 39 (1967), and Calvino's essay featured in issue 46 of the same journal that year.

negli anni 1945-50 i romanzi si volevano far entrare in uno scaffale che era essenzialmente politico, o storico-politico, rivolgersi a un lettore interessato principalmente alla cultura politica e alla storia contemporanea, e di cui pure pareva urgente soddisfare anche una 'domanda' (o carenza) letteraria. L'operazione, impostata così, *non poteva che fallire*: la cultura politica non era qualcosa di dato, ai cui valori la letteratura doveva affiancare o adeguare i propri (visti anche questi – tranne poche casi – come valori costituiti, 'classici'), ma era anche qualcosa da fare, anzi è qualcosa che richiede continuamente d'essere costruita e messa in discussione confrontandola con (e mettendo insieme in discussione) tutto il lavoro che il resto della cultura sta compiendo. (*Una pietra sopra*, p. 194, my italics)

Calvino expressly rejects the notion that writing may successfully dialogue with the socio-political climate, and suggests that such a project is doomed to fail.

Calvino goes on to stress the limited function that literature may play in the contemporary climate, writing:

per prima cosa occorre che la letteratura riconosca quanto il suo peso politico è modesto: la lotta si decide in base a linee strategiche e tattiche generali e rapporti di forza; in questo quadro un libro è un granello di sabbia, specie un libro letterario. L'effetto che un'opera importante (scientifica o letteraria) può avere sulla lotta generale in corso è di portarlo su un livello di consapevolezza più alto. (*Una pietra sopra* p. 197)

Calvino is not alone in his view that literature is no longer (if it ever was) an effective means of influencing the socio-political climate. Pasolini outlined his own personal crisis in literature at a literary circle in Brescia in 1964, where he had been invited to speak on 'Marxismo e cristianesimo', following a screening of his latest film, *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*.²⁴ Pasolini revealed that between 1960 and 1964, when he had conceptualized and produced *Il Vangelo*, he had suffered a personal, psychological crisis. Pasolini realized that this loss of faith coincided with a more general predicament in Italian culture, a profound and

²⁴ Details of Pasolini's Brescia lecture are outlined in Marco Belpoliti, *Settanta* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), pp. 53-55.

significant crisis which would undermine the literature of the preceding years. Pasolini argued that the notion of *impegno* itself had become unfashionable, and that the wave of hope and communication engendered by the Resistance had passed, leaving writers alone and isolated. As a result, Pasolini felt that literature no longer offered an effective means of engagement, and argued that cinema represented a more suitable medium for directly communicating with a wider audience. His belief in the power of cinema was such that during the 1960s Pasolini released sixteen films.

It is important to signal the centrality of not only the Italian movement but also of the French avant-garde, both in terms of Calvino's rejection of *impegno* and in relation to the re-appropriation of socio-political engagement by Sciascia and Tabucchi in later years. France and French literary culture provide key reference points for all three writers, who each spend a significant time in the country: Calvino lived in Paris from 1967-1979; Tabucchi spent a year as a student in Paris; and Sciascia was a frequent visitor to the French capital.²⁵ As Belpoliti observes, Calvino gave a reading of Barthes' essay 'The Death of the Author' in his 1968 essay 'Cibernetica e fantasmi (Appunti sulla narrativa come processo combinatorio)' long before the essay was known in Italy.²⁶ Barthes' arguments can have done little to restore Calvino's faith in the power of literature

²⁵ Tabucchi outlines some of his Parisian experiences in *Alberto Arbasino, Italo Calvino, Andrea Camilleri, Umberto Eco, Mario Luzi, Claudio Magris, Dacia Maraini, Antonio Tabucchi raccontano se stessi*, ed. by Alberto Scarponi (Rome: Gangemi, 2002), pp. 112-13. In a series of conversations with Domenico Porzio during 1988 and 1989, Sciascia states that 'nel 1977, a dire il vero, avevo trasferito la residenza a Parigi. Ma Panella mi ha poi persuaso a entrare nelle liste radicali e sono stato eletto. Infine la passione per il caso Moro. Questi fatti messi assieme mi hanno convinto di tornare in Italia'. Domenico Porzio and Leonardo Sciascia, *Fuoco all'anima: Conversazione con Domenico Porzio* (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), p. 30.

²⁶ Belpoliti, *Settanta*, p. 168. 'Cibernetica e fantasmi' is included in *Una pietra sopra*, pp. 199-219.

to act as an agent of change, and indeed Guido Bonsaver suggests that Calvino struggled to reconcile his position as a committed left-wing intellectual with the ideas espoused in Barthes' essays.²⁷ It is worth recalling the terms of Barthes' essay, as it represents one of the elements which undermine socio-political engagement for the architects of *impegno*, whilst simultaneously providing the material for a rebirth of socio-political engagement in the works of Leonardo Sciascia and Antonio Tabucchi. Barthes writes that:

We now know the text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture [...] the writer can only imitate, a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as to never rest on any one of them.²⁸

Intertextuality provides an obstacle to engagement for Calvino, as literary and socio-political discourses are divorced: literature is home to explorations of intertextuality, and cannot offer a valid meaning in a socio-political context.

Calvino's uneasy response to French post-structuralist discourse, and his sense that engagement becomes impossible in a post-structuralist world, is confirmed in his 1976 essay 'Usi politici giusti e sbagliati della letteratura' (*Una pietra sopra*, pp. 345-55). Calvino's bewilderment in a post-structuralist world is palpable as he writes that:

tutti i parametri, le categorie, le antitesi che usavamo per definire, classificare, progettare il mondo sono messi in questione. Non solo quelli

²⁷ Guido Bonsaver, 'Il Menabò, Calvino and the "Avanguardia": Some Observations on the Literary Debate of the Sixties', *Italian Studies*, 50 (1996), 86-96 (p. 95).

²⁸ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in Roland Barthes, *Image, Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 142-48 (p. 146).

più legati a valori storici, ma anche quelli che sembravano essere categorie antropologiche stabili: ragione e mito, lavoro ed esistenza, maschio e femmina, e perfino la polarità delle topologie più elementari: affermazione e negazione, sopra e sotto, soggetto e oggetto. (Calvino, *Una pietra sopra*, p. 346)

The terms of Calvino's argument suggest a close dialogue with Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* and with his lecture on 'Différance'. As in the case of Barthes' essay, it is worth recalling the original texts, as these also constitute the 'ashes' of *impegno*, the destructive force which is re-appropriated as the basis for engagement by Tabucchi and Sciascia. In his work on the trace, Derrida re-evaluates many of the divisions and binaries that have shaped Western thought. In *Of Grammatology* he writes that 'all dualisms, all theories of the immortality of the soul or of the spirit, as well as all monisms, spiritualist or materialist, dialectical or vulgar' belong to 'a metaphysics whose entire history was compelled to strive toward the reduction of the trace'.²⁹ Thus once we fully consider the implications of the trace, then the old binaries are problematized and undermined. Derrida reiterates this point in the lecture on 'Différance', stressing the need to

reconsider all the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is constructed and on which our discourse lives, not in order to see opposition erase itself but to see what indicates that each of the terms must appear as *différance* of the other, as the other differed and deferred.³⁰

Binaries and oppositions become contaminated, with no clear concepts, and this leads to Calvino's anxieties that 'tutti i parametri, le categorie, le antitesi che

²⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 71.

³⁰ Derrida's lecture 'Différance' was given to the *Société française de la philosophie* and is reproduced in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 61-79 (p. 70).

usavamo per definire, classificare, progettare il mondo sono messi in questione'.

In such a world literature cannot engage with socio-political concerns.

Engagement in the 1970s

Burns observes that the absence of fixed parameters is represented in a slightly less anxious fashion in Calvino's 1972 essay 'Lo sguardo dell'archeologo' (*Una pietra sopra*, pp. 318-21).³¹ In this earlier essay Calvino writes that the parameters, categories and antitheses used to classify the world 'sono in discussione', whereas by 1976 they are 'messi in questione'.³² In the first instance, the concept is a work in progress, a problem to be resolved, whereas four years later, Calvino has been able to find no response and accepts that they are irrevocably undermined, with no answer forthcoming. What is certainly the case is that from 1972, the year in which Calvino raised his concerns in 'Lo sguardo dell'archeologo', until 1979, Calvino published no literary texts. Calvino's absence from the Italian literary scene was both figurative and literal, as he spent the period from 1967-1979 in Paris.³³ Thus, Calvino was outside Italy in 1968, when the uprising and social turmoil perhaps offered the possibility for writers to become involved in events through their texts. Calvino saw the events

³¹ Burns, *Fragments*, p. 50.

³² Calvino's 1972 essay, 'Lo sguardo dell'archeologo' is notable in that it uses much of the same terminology as the 1976 essay 'Usi politici giusti e sbagliati della letteratura'. In 1972 Calvino writes that 'tutti i parametri, le categorie, le antitesi che erano serviti per immaginare e classificare e progettare il mondo sono in discussione: e non solo quelli più legati ad attribuzioni di valori storiche: il razionale e il mitico, il lavorare e l'esistere, il maschile e il femminile, ma pure i poli di topologie ancor più elementare: l'affermare e il negare, l'alto e il basso, il vivente e la cosa' (Calvino, *Una pietra sopra*, p. 319).

³³ Bonsaver suggests that Calvino's move to Paris seemed to make his detachment from the Italian literary milieu explicit (Bonsaver, *'Il Menabò'*, p. 86).

of 1968 as a missed opportunity, which confirmed his notion that writers could engage with society through the media but not through fiction. He assesses the period following 1968 in his 1976 essay 'Usi politici giusti e sbagliati della letteratura', writing that:

la destrutturazione dell'opera letteraria poteva aprire la via a una nuova valutazione e una nuova strutturazione. Cosa ne è venuto fuori? Niente [...] Il nuovo radicalismo degli studenti del Sessantotto è stata caratterizzata in Italia da un rifiuto della letteratura. (Calvino, *Una pietra sopra*, p. 348).

In this essay Calvino argues that, in the absence of engagement through literature, the role of the intellectual changed, so that the new duties comprised involvement in newspaper and television debates, in order to 'occupare lo spazio vacante d'un discorso politico intelligibile' (Calvino, *Una pietra sopra*, p. 349). The theoretical position espoused in his later essay is certainly borne out by Calvino's writings of the period. Belpoliti suggests that the fantastical nature of Calvino's 1972 novel *Le città invisibili* represents an attempt to flee and indeed to counter-balance the gravity of the student uprisings, the strategy of tension and terrorism of the *anni di piombo*.³⁴ Calvino published no novels during the central years of the 1970s, when terrorism and the strategy of tension were at their peak, but he did continue to write fiction, in the form of the Palomar stories. Signor Palomar appeared in August 1975 in *Corriere della sera* and readers followed his travels in Mexico and Japan for three years, in seventeen *articoli-racconti*, and then Palomar re-appeared in *La Repubblica* in 1980. Belpoliti suggests that these

³⁴ Belpoliti, *Settanta*, p. 110. The *anni di piombo* refers to the violence that characterized the 1970s, carried out by left and right wing paramilitary groups. Elements within government, the secret services and the armed forces supported right-wing terrorism, which aimed to engender fear and so provoke authoritarian rule, known as the 'strategy of tension'. For a detailed analysis, see Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, pp. 348-405.

travel tales, like the earlier *Città invisibili*, represent 'una via di fuga dal vicolo cieco della realtà presente'.³⁵ The crucial divide between literature and journalism is crystallized by Calvino's decision to expunge all socio-cultural references from the Palomar stories when he turned them into a book in 1983 suggesting that fiction does not engage with the socio-political climate.³⁶ Calvino used his journalism to dialogue with his era, often publishing on the front page of *Corriere della sera*. The pessimism which Burns sees as characterizing Calvino's journalistic writing in the 1970s counters the lightness which Belpoliti suggests defines *Le città invisibili*.³⁷

Like Calvino, Pasolini chose journalism as the most effective means of engaging with society. Pasolini had written newspaper articles from the 1950s onwards, but became more heavily involved in journalism from 1973 onwards, becoming a regular and notable contributor to mainstream newspapers, in particular to *Corriere della sera*. Pasolini's articles were not confined to the *terza pagina* but also graced the front pages.³⁸ Through his journalism, Pasolini stressed that intellectuals (and especially writers) had a crucial role to play in society. In 1974, Pasolini insisted that unlike in the 1960s, 'oggi ci sono delle

³⁵ Belpoliti, *Settanta*, p. 153. Belpoliti goes on to observe that Manganelli's travel literature and fantastical writing of the era represent a similar urge to escape reality.

³⁶ Belpoliti analyses Palomar's metamorphosis as he moves from *Corriere della sera* to *La Repubblica* to book format (*Settanta*, pp. 208-209).

³⁷ Belpoliti, *Settanta*, p. 110; Burns, *Fragments*, p. 43. Burns suggests that in Calvino's pessimistic view of the world around him, he regards not individuals but the hidden strategists and systems which support them as dangerous, and he dwells in particular upon the Piazza Fontana bomb and the failure to satisfactorily attribute blame.

³⁸ Pasolini's newspaper articles are collected in *Scritti Corsari* (Milan: Garzanti, 1975) and *Lettere Luterane* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976). Burns offers an interesting analysis of Pasolini's newspaper articles of the 1970s in relation to the *impegno* debate (Burns, *Fragments*, pp. 40-43).

ragioni per un impegno totale'.³⁹ He asserted that intellectuals had a duty to dialogue with and so influence society, pointing to the privileged viewpoint of the writer. In an article for *Corriere della sera* in November 1974, Pasolini writes that:

io so perché sono un intellettuale, uno scrittore, che cerca di seguire tutto ciò che succede, di conoscere tutto ciò che se ne scrive, di immaginare tutto ciò che non si sa o che si tace, che coordina fatti anche lontani, che mette insieme i pezzi disorganizzati e frammentari di un intero coerente quadro politico, che ristabilisce la logica là dove sembrano regnare l'arbitrarietà, la follia e il mistero.⁴⁰

Pasolini's desire to engage with society appears as strong as in the 1960s, however, as Burns points out, by the 1970s Pasolini represents a lone voice rather than one voice in a chorus of many.⁴¹

Sciascia and Pasolini

Although Pasolini is a lone voice calling for traditional *impegno* to be channelled through journalistic writing, he is not alone in using writing as a means of engaging in dialogue with society, as a medium which may influence the reader and so perhaps have an impact on the contemporary world. In his 1979 collection of diary entries Sciascia reflects on the path he and Pasolini chose in the course of the 1970s, writing:

³⁹ Pasolini's article 'Gli intellettuali nel '68: manicheismo e ortodossia della "Rivoluzione dell'indomani"', appeared in *Dramma* (March 1974), and is reproduced in *Scritti corsari*, pp. 35-37.

⁴⁰ Pasolini's article was published as 'Che cos'è questo golpe?', in *Corriere della Sera*, 14 November 1974, and is reproduced as '14 November 1974. Il romanzo delle stragi', in *Scritti corsari*, pp. 111-17 (p. 112).

⁴¹ Burns, *Fragments*, p. 42.

Io ero – e lo dico senza vantarmene, dolorosamente – la sola persona in Italia con cui lui potesse veramente parlare. Negli ultimi anni abbiamo pensato le stesse cose, detto le stesse cose, sofferto e pagato per le stesse cose. Eppure non siamo riusciti a parlarci, a dialogare.⁴²

Sciascia's observation is telling in two ways. On the one hand it asserts a sense of continuity between Pasolini's and Sciascia's belief in the importance of writing and their concerns about contemporary society, while on the other it also underscores a fundamental difference between the paths that the two men chose. Both the continuity and divergence becomes apparent if we consider Pasolini's 'L'articolo delle lucciole' and Sciascia's 1971 novel *Il contesto*.⁴³ Both texts espouse the notion that true power is wielded by unseen forces, and so the individual must be alert and aware in order to challenge the status quo. However whereas Pasolini chooses journalism as the most effective means of dialoguing with society, having abandoned fiction in the preceding decade, Sciascia chooses literature as a channel of communication with his reader. Thus whilst Sciascia and Pasolini may appear to engage with similar topics during the 1970s, I would suggest that a more valid comparison may be drawn between Pasolini's post-war belief in the value of writing and Sciascia's writings from 1975 onwards. Sciascia's commitment, like that of Tabucchi, may be seen as a re-emergence of the post-war faith in literature, at a time when the main architects of *impegno* were no longer looking to literature as a means of engaging with society. By the mid 1970s Calvino's writing had forked into journalistic pieces which engaged with the socio-political climate and fiction which sought to escape reality;

⁴² Leonardo Sciascia, *Nero su nero*, in *II*, pp. 601-846 (p. 774).

⁴³ Pasolini's article was originally published as 'Il vuoto del potere in Italia' in *Corriere della Sera* on 1 February 1975, and is reproduced in *Scritti corsari*, pp. 160-68. Sciascia's novel appears in *II*, pp. 1-96.

Pasolini had forsaken literature in favour of the cinema and also chose journalism as the most effective means of engagement; and Vittorini was no longer alive.⁴⁴

Impegno to socio-political engagement

Valid comparisons may be drawn between the post-war faith in literature as a means of engaging with society and the ways in which Sciascia and Tabucchi view reading and writing as important means of influencing the contemporary world. However it is important not to confuse post-war *impegno* with the later, very different manifestations of committed literature evident in Sciascia's and Tabucchi's texts; engaged writing which takes account of (in separate and individual ways) the challenges posed to literary engagement during the 1950s and 1960s. Tabucchi certainly rejects the term *impegno*, viewing it as anachronistic. In a 1997 interview with Bernard Comment, Tabucchi defines *impegno* as a 'termine assolutamente inopportuno, che io non ho mai utilizzato, e che in Italia provoca disgusto immediato, per via della sua associazione con l'idea comunista'.⁴⁵ Sciascia, on the other hand, embraces the title of *impegnato*, although close examination of his notion of *impegno* reveals some interesting discrepancies between his beliefs and the programme of the post-war writers. Sciascia certainly shares the post-war writers' belief that literature should seek to communicate a truth between the writer and the reader. In a 1978 interview Sciascia explains that:

⁴⁴ Vittorini died in 1966.

⁴⁵ The interview forms part of Tabucchi's text *La gastrite di Platone* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1998), p. 52.

io mi sento impegnato soprattutto con me stesso, per me stesso. E con altri me stesso, cioè i miei lettori. Credo che i lettori stiano bene con me, i miei libri, proprio perché si sentono alla pari. Il lettore è per me come il prossimo del Vangelo. Lo amo come me stesso perché è un altro me stesso. È questo il nocciolo dell'impegno, del mio impegno: non è possibile mentire a se stessi. Io posso sbagliarmi, posso non capire. Mentire, mai. Che senso avrebbe mentire per ingannare me stesso?⁴⁶

The sense of the writer and reader being 'alla pari' evokes Calvino's discussion of the 'immediatezza di comunicazione tra lo scrittore e il suo pubblico' in the post-war period, outlined in his 1964 preface to *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*.

In common with the neorealist writers, Sciascia (1921-1989) grew up under fascism and found the experience shaped his ethical outlook, and his desire, as a writer, to engage with his socio-political world. However as a Sicilian, Sciascia's experience of fascism and of the war was very different in two important ways. In the first instance, although Sciascia attended anti-fascist meetings from 1938 onwards, he was not involved in the Resistance.⁴⁷ The Resistance was a wholly northern phenomenon, and so the post-war desire to use the partisan experience as a blueprint for future society was alien to Sciascia.⁴⁸ Indeed, Sciascia was scathing about the neorealist literature which sought to map out such a programme, explaining in a 1978 interview that such a project 'mi è parso subito falso'.⁴⁹ Although fascism was a shaping influence on Sciascia, his development was also influenced by other factors, and so the experience of

⁴⁶ The interview with *Grazia* in September 1978 is reproduced in *La palma va a nord*, ed. by Valter Vecellio (Milan: Gammalibri, 1982), pp. 68-69.

⁴⁷ Sciascia recounts that he attended anti-fascist meetings in Marcelle Padovani and Leonardo Sciascia, *La Sicilia come metafora: Intervista di Marcelle Padovani* (Milan: Mondadori, 1979), p. 123.

⁴⁸ Vittorini, one of the great architects of *impegno* and neorealism, was also Sicilian; however he left the island and moved to the north of Italy in the 1920s.

⁴⁹ Sciascia's description of neorealism appeared in *Mondo operaio* in December 1978 and is reproduced in Vecellio, *La palma va a nord*, p. 135.

fascism was contextualized in a wider system of abuses. Sciascia observes that as a Sicilian, 'ho passato i primi vent'anni della mia vita dentro una società doppiamente non libera, doppiamente non razionale. Una società-non società, in effetti. La Sicilia di cui Pirandello ha dato la più vera e profonda rappresentazione. E il fascismo'.⁵⁰ If the fascism which ruled Italy from 1922-1943 represents only one manifestation of a wider system of abuses, then Sciascia, unlike the neorealist writers, is not focused on the rebuilding of a society in the aftermath of the fascism which ended with the war. Sciascia's engagement is far more wide-reaching, looking to combat any system of abuses which threatens to become the new fascism. For Sciascia, fascism remains a living threat rather than a historical evil. In a 1979 interview with Marcelle Padovani, Sciascia outlines both the importance of fascism in shaping his engagement and his concept of fascism as an enduring menace:

Non dubito affatto che quest'impegno deriva dalla mia condizione familiare, che ha saputo suscitare in me un istinto di classe; e poi dall'esperienza del fascismo, che è stata dura e 'sofferta', come si usa dire, e che mi ha fatto capire come il fascismo non potesse realizzarsi che contro di me, contro i miei interessi e quelli di tutti coloro che mi assomigliavano. Credo che, se sono diventato un certo tipo di scrittore, lo devo alla passione antifascista. La mia sensibilità al fascismo continua a essere assai forte, lo riconosco ovunque e in ogni luogo, persino quando riveste i panni dell'antifascismo, e resto sensibile all'eternamente possibile fascismo italiano. Il fascismo non è morto. Convinto di questo, sento una gran voglia di combattere, di impegnarmi di più, di essere sempre più deciso e intransigente, di mantenere un atteggiamento sempre polemico nei riguardi di qualsiasi potere. (Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, p. 85)

Since the neorealist writers were focused upon the resurrection of a new society, based on a roughly communist blueprint as an antidote to fascism, then the Soviet

⁵⁰ Leonardo Sciascia, cited in the *Cronologia*, in *I*, pp. il-lxxx (p. li).

invasion of Hungary in 1956 and the waning of revolutionary zeal in the wake of the economic boom seriously challenged and undermined their project. Sciascia's project, however, was unfettered by either of these events. As Sciascia sought to challenge all regimes which sought to instigate abuses, he was not ideologically bound to defend to the *PCI*. As Sciascia's texts did not promulgate a classless society based on the Resistance, the complacency of the working classes did not force him to question his literary engagement. As part of a younger generation, Tabucchi (1943-) did not have to struggle with the issues of the boom or of the increasing disillusionment with communism. By the time Tabucchi published his first novel in 1975, the *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) and the *PCI* were perhaps equally discredited, equally unable to offer solutions to the civil unrest and the terrorism which plagued Italy during the *anni di piombo*.⁵¹ From the ashes of the communist vision, Tabucchi was able to voice a challenge to both, indeed all, sides of the Italian political spectrum.

Sciascia and Tabucchi adopt very different methodologies to deal with the challenges posed to committed literature by the literary developments of the 1960s. Despite such differences, crucially both of them find ways to incorporate the problematization of truth and of language into their engagement with society, and use the discourses of intertextuality to strengthen rather than weaken their dialogue with the reader. The issues which reduced the engagement of the post-war architects of *impegno* to cinders provide material for the very different forms of committed literature which Sciascia and Tabucchi develop in their writing.

⁵¹ Tabucchi's first novel was *Piazza d'Italia* (Milan: Bompiani, 1975). Subsequent page references refer to the 1998 Feltrinelli edition. Ginsborg analyses the political crisis and compromises during the *anni di piombo* in *A History of Contemporary Italy*, pp. 348-405.

The Tabucchi/Eco debate

Sciascia's particularity as a writer using literature to engage with society in the 1970s is brought into relief through a comparison of his work and Pasolini's stance, and through Sciascia's own commentary on Pasolini's death. The particularity of Tabucchi's belief in literature as a means of engaging with society is underscored through a polemic between Tabucchi and Umberto Eco in 1997, in which Tabucchi seeks to establish the function of the intellectual in the post-war era. In 'Il primo dovere degli intellettuali: Stare zitti quando non servono a niente', which appeared in *L'Espresso* on 24 April 1997, Eco suggests that the role of the intellectual is very limited. Tabucchi's vehement response to Eco's essay underlines a huge divergence between the positions of two of the most prominent intellectuals of their time. In his reply, 'Un fiammifero Minerva', Tabucchi takes issue with two claims made by Eco: that in the case of a fire, an intellectual can do nothing but call the fire brigade; and that faced with an intransigent Mayor who refuses to offer asylum to four Albanians, protest on the part of the intellectual is fruitless and so the intellectual should focus on writing a book that will educate the Mayor's grandchildren, in order to create a better future.⁵² Tabucchi very deliberately states that by 'intellectual' he includes writers and poets, and that they have a much greater role in society than that prescribed by Eco (*La gastrite*, p. 16). Tabucchi refutes Eco's first notion of a fire, stating that in the event of a fire, a fireman may extinguish the blaze and investigators may establish the cause, but if doubts and discrepancies emerge

⁵² Tabucchi's essay initially appeared in *Micromega* (May 1997), and was then used as the basis for *La gastrite di Platone*, which also includes an interview with Bernard Comment and two letters written from prison by Adriano Sofri, to whom 'Un fiammifero Minerva' is addressed.

from the inquest, then the intellectual's role comes to the fore (*La gastrite*, p. 40). The function of the intellectual is to ask questions; not so much “creare” delle crisi, ma *mettere in crisi*’ (*La gastrite*, p. 32, italics in text). This sense of the immediacy of the writer's role is reiterated in Tabucchi's refusal to accept that his function lies solely in writing schoolbooks to educate future generations, in his contestation of Eco's notion that ‘gli intellettuali sono utili alla società, ma solo nei tempi lunghi’ (*La gastrite*, p. 26). Tabucchi insists that ‘il compito dell'intellettuale (ma vorrei insistere, quello dell'artista), è proprio questo, [...] rimproverare a Platone di non aver inventato il rimedio per la gastrite. È questa la sua “funzione” (e, specifico, funzione *sporadica*)’ (*La gastrite*, pp. 28-29, italics in text). Thus, rather than aim solely at long-term goals, Tabucchi asserts that

voglio vivere nel mio oggi e nel mio ora; nell'Attuale. Voglio essere sincronico col mio Tempo, col mio mondo, con la realtà che la Natura (o il Caso, o Qualcosaltro) mi ha concesso di vivere in questo preciso momento del Tempo. L'idea di essere diacronico per i nipotini di tutti i sindaci d'Italia per quando arriveranno all'età della ragione non mi seduce affatto. (*La gastrite*, p. 41)

The polemic between Eco and Tabucchi clearly marks out Tabucchi's notion of committed writing as unique amongst his peers.

1975

In his assertion that the writer has a role to play in society, Tabucchi quotes heavily from Pasolini's ‘Che cos'è questo golpe?’. Indeed, almost an entire page of text is given over to Pasolini's voice, as Pasolini stresses the importance of the writer's task of building a picture of a troubled political framework through the fragments of information available (*La gastrite*, pp. 28-29). Pasolini's text

underlines the value of the writer's efforts in reconstructing these fragments to engage in a meaningful discourse with the socio-political climate. Tabucchi questions whether Pasolini's concept has been forgotten, very deliberately stating 'io non me lo sono dimenticato', underscoring his own belief in Pasolini's concept of the writer (*La gastrite*, p. 28).

Tabucchi's sense of the need to follow Pasolini's notion of the writer's role emerges even more strongly in the interview with Bernard Comment which follows on from his essay. When asked if there is a contemporary debate in Italy concerning the role of the intellectual or the writer in society, Tabucchi tellingly responds that:

il ruolo svolto da Vittorini nel dopoguerra di fronte a uno stalinista come Togliatti, o da Pasolini e da Sciascia di fronte a quello che essi chiamavano 'il potere del Palazzo', in altre parole la corruzione a livello di Stato, è stato sepolto ai tempi dei magnifici anni Ottanta sotto il rullo compressore del socialismo alla Craxi. (*La gastrite*, p. 45)

Tabucchi defines a tradition of engaged writing which moves from Vittorini, to Pasolini and Sciascia, to a silence. Clearly the silence which Tabucchi depicts is not total, since the previous thirty-seven pages of text have been dedicated to outlining Tabucchi's own belief that writers have a duty to engage with the socio-political climate. Thus, in very modest terms, Tabucchi traces a genealogy from Vittorini to himself. Tabucchi's notion of committed literature, outlined in the first section of 'Un fiammifero Minerva' may be understood as representing the next generation of engaged literature after Pasolini and after Sciascia.

Pasolini's death in 1975 represents one of the reasons for focussing on the period from 1975-2004. In 1975, the initial architects of committed writing were

silenced: Pasolini and Vittorini by death, Calvino through his artistic choices.⁵³ Although Pasolini abandoned literature as a means of engagement in the early 1960s, his continued sense of the role of the intellectual in society ensured that his death nonetheless left a substantial void. It is not only Tabucchi who articulates the need to carry on Pasolini's legacy, since Sciascia also highlights Pasolini's death as marking a shift in his own writing. In a 1981 interview with Davide Lajolo, Sciascia explains that:

io ho voluto molto bene a Pasolini e gli sono stato molto amico, anche se, negli ultimi anni, ci siamo scritti e visti pochissimo [...] dicevamo quasi le stesse cose, ma io sommessamente. Da quando non c'è lui mi sono accorto, mi accorgo, di parlare più forte.⁵⁴

Sciascia's sentiments are much stronger on Pasolini's death than on Vittorini's death. In May 1966, Sciascia commented that 'ho avuto per Vittorini grande ammirazione e affetto. Se sono uno scrittore lo debbo a lui: non al suo aiuto pratico: ma all'aiuto che ho tratto dalla sua opera, dai suoi intendimenti' (*Cronologia*, I, p. lix). Whereas Sciascia recognizes his debt to Vittorini, he stresses that Pasolini's death engendered a change in his own position, strengthening his engagement.

1975 represents an important date also in other respects. *Piazza d'Italia*, Tabucchi's first novel, appeared in 1975, marking the beginning of his literary

⁵³ Romano Luperini suggests that Calvino did not relinquish his role as writer-intellectual until the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s; however, Calvino's literary silence since 1972 was broken in 1979 by a text which focuses on intertextuality rather than on engagement. Calvino continued to write newspaper articles and essays which examined the notion of whether literature could engage with society, such as 'Usi politici giusti e sbagliati della letteratura' (1976), yet he did not produce engaged literature himself. Hence, I would suggest that in 1975 Calvino may be considered as silent. Romano Luperini, 'Bilancio di un trentennio letterario (1960-1990) e ipotesi sul presente', in *Scrittori, tendenze letterarie e conflitto delle poetiche in Italia (1960-1990)*, ed. by Rocco Capozzi and Massimo Ciavolella (Ravenna: Longo, 1993), pp. 7-16 (p. 11).

⁵⁴ Davide Lajolo, ed., *Conversazione in una stanza chiusa* (Milan: Sperling & Knupfer, 1981), pp. 68-69.

career.⁵⁵ At that point Sciascia had been publishing for two decades and was midway through a publishing career which would span until his death in 1989.⁵⁶ In 1975 Sciascia's conception of the reader for whom he was writing underwent a radical transition. In June 1975, he stood as an independent on the *PCI* list in the local elections in Palermo. During the electoral campaign, Sciascia met many readers and potential readers, which had a huge impact on his conception of himself as writer. He explains that:

facendo questo viaggio elettorale, incontro i miei lettori. Prima, io avevo davanti un tipo di lettore, diciamo borghese. Adesso invece ho incontro il lettore popolare: il ferroviere, il parucchiere, il portinaio, gente che durante le ore di lavoro ha dei momenti di calma e li passa leggendo libri. Questo lettore legge i miei libri cercando di cavarne qualcosa. Li legge come se fossero non dei romanzi, ma dei pamphlet: non come letteratura ma dei colpi contro il potere, quegli stessi colpi che lui vorrebbe dare se sapesse scrivere. Il lettore borghese è sorpreso dalla mia scelta di presentarmi alle elezioni, lui pensa che uno scrittore debba starsene in disparte, a pensare, a giudicare. Il lettore popolare non è sorpreso perché lo scrittore lo immagina proprio come uno che interviene di persona. (*Cronologia*, I, p. lxii)

Thus 1975 represents a key moment, in which Tabucchi begins to publish, and Sciascia re-assesses his readership.

Focusing on the period 1975-2005 permits an analysis of the continuity and progression in two writers who retain a belief in the power of literature to engage with society against a backdrop of the silence of the architects of *impegno* and a refusal of engagement by their contemporaries. The 1980s in particular have been seen as a moment in which engagement was sacrificed to the *riflusso*,

⁵⁵ In an interview with Anna Botta, Tabucchi explains that although he has always written, he did not publish until he was thirty, as 'contemporaneamente I did other things: I lived; I had children (which is an important thing); I taught at the University', in 'An Interview with Antonio Tabucchi Conducted by Anna Botta', *Contemporary Literature*, 35, no. 1 (Spring 1994), 421-40 (p. 435).

⁵⁶ Sciascia began publishing in 1950 with a short collection of brief fables, *Le favole della dittatura* (III, pp. 957-67).

and yet both the literature and the declarations of intent by Sciascia and Tabucchi indicate a different position.⁵⁷ In 1978 Sciascia admitted that the path of committed writer was not an easy one, that 'certo che si paga. Il prezzo per ora, in una società come la nostra, è la solitudine. L'isolamento.'⁵⁸ As the 1980s progress and Tabucchi's writings become ever more prolific, I suggest that Sciascia's stance becomes less isolated, as Tabucchi's voice joins Sciascia's, rising from the ashes of *impegno* to enunciate a powerful engagement with society.

⁵⁷ The standard view of the 1980s is one of indifference to literature, known as *il riflusso*. See Pertile, 'The Italian Novel Today', pp.1-19 and Burns, *Fragments*, pp. 1-10.

⁵⁸ The interview with *Grazia* in September 1978 is reproduced in Vecellio, *La palma va a nord*, p. 135.

1.2 Direct Comment on Contemporary Events

Italy's troubled climate from 1975 onwards offers wide scope for the engaged writer to comment on contemporary issues. On the domestic front, terrorism, political re-structuring and changing attitudes towards the Church and the family call for a response, whilst globalization, immigration and contemplation of Italy's place in a changing world order invite comment from a wider perspective. In her text *Fragments of Impegno*, Jennifer Burns suggests that the macro-political engagement which characterized Italian intellectual intervention in the post-war years began to be increasingly replaced by micro-political engagement in the decades following the 1950s.¹ It is through this lens of micro-engagement that I wish to explore Tabucchi's and Sciascia's direct engagement with both social and political issues in this chapter, questioning whether their micro-engagement with such issues affords a broader perspective on wider concerns.

Angela Jeannet has suggested that there is a need to distinguish between Tabucchi as a fiction writer and Tabucchi as an intellectual engaging in contemporary affairs in texts such as *La gastrite di Platone* or *Gli Zingari e il Rinascimento*.² In this chapter I wish to test the validity of this claim, in relation to the writings of both Tabucchi and Sciascia, by analysing in tandem their fictional texts and their use of fictional lenses in commentary and reportage. I

¹ Jennifer Burns, *Fragments of Impegno: Interpretations of Commitment in Contemporary Italian Narrative 1980-2000* (Leeds: Northern Universities Press, 2001), p. 1.

² Angele M. Jeannet, 'A Matter of Injustice: Violence and Death in Antonio Tabucchi', *Annali d'italianistica*, 19 (2001), 153-69 (p. 154); Antonio Tabucchi, *La gastrite di Platone* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1998); Antonio Tabucchi, *Gli Zingari e il Rinascimento: Vivere da Roma a Firenze* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1999).

wish to firstly focus on Sciascia's and Tabucchi's representation of the *pentiti* phenomenon, both through commentaries and through fictional representations. I will then consider the extent to which Sciascia's use of fiction to challenge police corruption and incompetence in *Una storia semplice* differs from his treatment of similar themes in his collection of newspaper articles *A futura memoria (se il futuro ha una memoria)*.³ The theme of police accountability is central to Tabucchi's 1997 text *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro*, which offers the reader a fictional account of an actual murder in Portugal.⁴ This text offers an excellent opportunity to explore the effect of the fictionalization process on Tabucchi's engagement with specific contemporary events. Finally, I wish to examine the use by both Sciascia and Tabucchi of fictional lenses in their full-length reportages *L'affaire Moro* and *Gli Zingari*, investigating the ways in which such prisms are used to further their engagement.⁵

Commentary on the *pentiti* trials: The Enzo Tortora case

Both Sciascia and Tabucchi engage with the practice of using *pentiti*, of allowing defendants to be convicted solely on the (often contradictory) testimony of a witness already known to have a criminal past. The *pentiti* were used from the early 1980s onwards to prosecute terrorists from the 1970s movements, and the practice was expanded to incorporate mafia prosecutions, in a bid to break the code of *omertà*. The practice was controversial from its inception. Although

³ *Una storia semplice* appears III, pp. 729-761; *A futura memoria (se il futuro ha una memoria)* appears in III, pp. 763-898.

⁴ Page references to *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro* are to the 2002 Feltrinelli edition of the text (originally published in 1997).

⁵ *L'affaire Moro* appears in II, pp. 462-599.

pentiti had been used by police to act against the mafia throughout the twentieth-century, they had never been asked to give evidence in court. This changed with the testimony of Tommaso Buscetta, an *ex-mafioso* turned *pentito*. Salvatore Lupo writes that

Buscetta e soci non sono – come si sostiene- i primi a parlare, a rompere il ‘ferreo’ muro dell’omertà: i mafiosi parlano sempre con la polizia, la indirizzano contro i loro avversari con la lettera anonima, con il colloquio informale [...] la novità del maxiprocesso è che i mafiosi parlano in tribunale.⁶

Writing on the Inquisition, G. G. Coulton observes that ‘whereas in all other courts, the evidence of infamous persons or heretics was ruled out, in this court they were welcomed, as long as their testimony was hostile’.⁷ Sciascia and Tabucchi engage directly with Italy’s new incarnation of this problematic process, focusing specifically on the trials of Enzo Tortora and Adriano Sofri.

Sciascia analyses the Tortora trial in his text *A futura memoria*, (*se il futuro ha una memoria*). The text comprises a selection of Sciascia’s newspaper articles, written between 1979 and 1989 about ‘certi delitti, certa amministrazione della giustizia; e sulla mafia’ (*A futura memoria*, III, p. 770). Although the basis of the text is journalistic, *A futura memoria* is greater than the sum of its parts, as the articles follow on thematically and chronologically from each other, narrating

⁶ Salvatore Lupo, *Storia della mafia: Dalle origini ai nostri giorni* (Rome: Donzelli, 1993), pp. 296-7. For an analysis of the use of *pentiti*, see John Dickie, *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2004), pp. 383-403; G. Fiandaca and S. Costantino, eds., *La mafia, le mafie* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1994), pp. v-xvi; Paul Ginsborg, *L’Italia del tempo presente: Famiglia, società, stato 1980-1996* (Einaudi: Turin, 1998), pp. 360-63; Lupo, *Storia della mafia*, pp. 239-321. Pino Arlacchi’s *Addio Cosa nostra: La vita di Tommaso Buscetta* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1994), offers an account of the *pentiti* trials from the perspective of Tommaso Buscetta, the first *pentito*. Other key *pentiti* include Antonino Calderone, Stefano Calzetta, Salvatore Contorno, Francesco Marino Mannoia, Vincenzo Marsala, Vincenzo Sinagra and Leonardo Vitale. See Diego Gambetta, *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 9.

⁷ G.G. Coulton, *Inquisition and Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. 121.

Sciascia's vision of events as the decade progresses. Thus the reader finds herself firmly ensconced inside Sciascia's narrative thread. This quasi-literary aspect is enhanced by the frequent literary references, from the opening quote taken from George Bernanos, to references to Agatha Christie, Borges, Borgese, Brancati, Cervantes, Flaubert, and to Sciascia's own fictional texts, *A ciascuno il suo* and *Il giorno della civetta*, all of which serve to contextualize the factual events within a world of make-believe.⁸ The articles, presented as a whole, go beyond individual piecemeal commentaries and tell a story of Italian justice over the course of the 1980s.

Enzo Tortora, a television presenter, was arrested as a *camorrista* as part of the 1983 *maxi-blitz* against the *Nuova camorra organizzata (NCO)*. He was convicted on the testimony of three *pentiti*, who had previously been members of the *NCO*: Pasquale Barra (known as *'o Animale*), Giovanni Pandico and Giovanni Melluso (known as *Giovanni il bello*). Aside from the testimonies of the witnesses, the evidence suggesting that Tortora was linked to the *NCO* was extremely flimsy and easily disproved. Initially, it appeared that Tortora's name was listed in the address book of a *camorrista*, yet the entry was later found to read 'Enzo Tortona' (a coffee-machine dealer), and in any case, the accompanying telephone number had never corresponded to that of Enzo Tortora. Similarly, the entry 'Tortora' in the address book of Raffaele Cutolo, the *NCO* boss, was later found to refer to a Rolando Tortora. Finally, the prosecution cited correspondence between Barbaro, another *camorrista* and Enzo Tortora. Letters

⁸ See for example *A futura memoria*, III, pp. 771, 803, 848, 832, 876-77, 849, 787, 837-38, 863, 817.

found, un-posted, at Barbaro's home demanded the return of 'centrini', which the prosecution claimed was a code-word for drugs. The defence argued that it referred rather more simply to the handicrafts which Barbaro had sent in to Tortora's television programme.⁹

In *A futura memoria*, Sciascia directly challenges the prosecution's case. He dismisses the alleged correspondence with Barbaro, declaring that 'il solo riscontro, la sola e vera prova, sarebbe il trovare un documento simile presso Tortora, in casa di Tortora o negli ambienti da lui frequentati e in cui gli sarebbe stato possibile nascondere' (*A futura memoria*, III, p. 821). Sciascia also points out that Tortora, an alleged member of the *NCO*, does not have the scars on his wrist from the *voto sanguinario* that *camorristi* had to undergo (*A futura memoria*, III, p. 821). In his defence of Tortora, Sciascia, known for his stance against the mafia, finds an unlikely ally in the *NCO* boss Raffaele Cutolo, who assured the court that Tortora 'è una degna persona, con noi e la camorra non c'entra nulla'.¹⁰ Nonetheless, in what Dickie describes as a 'grave miscarriage of justice', Tortora was found guilty of *associazione a delinquere* and drug trafficking (Dickie, *Cosa Nostra*, p. 394). This was based solely on the claims of the *pentiti*, despite the fact that Pandico, a key witness, had recently been indicted for perjury.¹¹

⁹For an account of Tortora's arrest and trial, see Enzo Tortora, *Cara Italia ti scrivo* (Milan: Mondadori, 1984); Sergio De Gregorio, *Tortora: Morire d'ingiustizia* (Naples: De Dominicis Editore, 1988); Paul Ginsborg, *Italy and its Discontents: Family, Civil Society and State 1980-2001* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 193.

¹⁰ Cutolo is cited in De Gregorio, *Morire d'ingiustizia*, p. 39.

¹¹ See De Gregorio, *Morire d'ingiustizia*, p. 96.

Sciascia's text remains focussed on Tortora as an individual, and he refuses to let Tortora's personal story be sacrificed in order to represent a principle, to represent the inherent injustice of trials based around the *pentiti*. Indeed, Sciascia affectionately criticises his (and Tortora's) friend Marco Panella, leader of the Radical Party, for falling into precisely this trap, warning him that 'non bisogna fermarsi al principio, ma combattere anche per l'innocenza di Tortora'.¹² In 1979, Sciascia stood as for election to the Italian Chamber as part of Panella's Radical Party. His shift of allegiance from the *PCI* to the Radical Party reflects his increased interest in the defence of the freedoms of the individual, perhaps to the detriment of collective values such as the fight against terrorism or the mafia. In terms of a macro- / micro-engagement model, Tortora represents the micro lens through which Sciascia views the phenomenon of the *pentiti* and, more widely again, his perennial concern of justice and the administration of it by fallible human beings. However, although the focus remains very much on Tortora's individual case, Sciascia uses Tortora's experience as a starting point to comment on the wider implications of the trials. Thus in *A futura memoria*, Tortora is often referred as one of two hundred people wrongly arrested in Naples that same night, due to their misfortune in sharing a name with *camorristi*, or alleged *camorristi* (*A futura memoria*, III, pp. 767, 822, 824). Sciascia explains that 'si difende Tortora per difendere il nostro diritto, il diritto di ogni cittadino, a non essere privato della libertà e a non essere esposto al pubblico ludubrio senza convincenti prove della sua colpevolezza' (*A futura memoria*, III, p. 829).

¹² Sciascia is cited in De Gregerio, *Morire d'ingiustizia*, p. 141.

Engagement with Tortora's case permits Sciascia to address the question of the possibility of administering justice.

However, the chief issue which Sciascia addresses through the microcosm of Tortora's trial concerns the growing power and influence of the anti-mafia movement throughout the 1980s, a movement which Sciascia viewed as dangerous and insidious.¹³ Lupo suggests that reactions to the anti-mafia movement polarised, embodied by Nando Dalla Chiesa on the one hand, who viewed the anti-mafia movement as a renewal and a renaissance, and Sciascia on the other, who saw the movement as 'una cultura delle manette' (Lupo, *Storia della mafia*, p. 294). Sciascia attacked in particular the appointment of Paolo Borsellino as Public Prosecutor at Marsala, claiming that Borsellino had been promoted over more senior colleagues in the wake of his anti-mafia work, and alleging that Borsellino's interest in the trials was linked more to his career than to justice (*A futura memoria*, III, p. 868). Sciascia's response to the anti-mafia trials (and to their practitioners) surprised and dismayed many commentators, who had applauded his earlier condemnation of both the mafia and those who passively accepted the mafia. Paolo Borsellino, for whom Sciascia had represented an intellectual father-figure, was particularly stung by Sciascia's

¹³ The anti-mafia drive culminated in the maxi-trial of 1986, in which 456 people were tried for mafia involvement, of whom 344 were found guilty. Paul Ginsborg analyses the political legislation behind the anti-mafia movement during the 1980s and 1990s in *L'Italia del tempo presente*, pp. 366-92. Salvatore Lupo examines the mafia murders of prominent politicians in the 1980s which led to action against the mafia in *Storia della mafia*, pp. 290-92. Matt Frei's analysis of the Sicilian reception of the anti-mafia movement, which he suggests was primarily positive, offers an interesting contrast to Sciascia's reaction to the movement, in *Italy: The Unfinished Revolution* (London: Mandarin, 1996), pp. 128-36. John Dickie's history of the Sicilian mafia considers not only the political and legal background to the maxi-trial but also addresses the mafia's response in the wake of the maxi-trial (Dickie, *Cosa Nostra*, pp. 379-443).

attack on him.¹⁴ Sciascia seemed surprised by the reception of his comments, writing that

io, che primo nella storia della letteratura italiana, avevo dato rappresentazione non apologetica del fenomeno mafioso, ma sempre con la preoccupazione che si finisse col combatterla con gli stessi metodi con cui il fascismo l'aveva combattuta (una mafia contro l'altra), [...] scrissi degli articoli in questo senso sul 'Corriere della Sera'. Ne venne una furente polemica, mi si accusava di indebolire la lotta alla mafia e quasi a favorirne l'esistenza'. (*A futura memoria*, III, p. 769).

Sciascia focuses his concern on the growing power of the anti-mafia movement, and his perception that it would brook no criticism (*A futura memoria*, III, p. 870).¹⁵ In *A futura memoria*, Sciascia channels his mistrust of the trials into an attack on the judges, writing

poiché la società li ha delegati a punire la violenza con la violenza (la violenza di condannare un uomo alla perdita della libertà, senza dire di dove lo si può ancora condannare alla perdita della vita), hanno bisogno di sentirsi sicuri, confortati, se non da un continuo e generale consenso, da una generale indifferenza e comunque da un'assenza di critica sul loro operare. (*A futura memoria*, III, p. 827).

These concerns do not wholly contradict Sciascia's earlier writings against the mafia, as indeed the fear that the mafia could not be challenged without resorting to measures as pernicious as the mafia itself is present in even his earliest texts. Lupo cites Sciascia's 1961 text *Il giorno della civetta* as one of the first clear voices against the mafia; yet Sciascia's criticisms come with an important caveat as to what methods may be employed to combat the mafia (Lupo, *Storia della*

¹⁴ See Dickie, *Cosa Nostra*, pp. 394-95.

¹⁵ Sciascia's concerns are reiterated by G. Fiandaca and S. Costantino in their introduction to *La mafia, le mafie*, in which they write that 'l'ottica del giudice, lungo da fotografare con piena oggettività la realtà così com'è, la interpreta e inquadra sotto gli schemi che fanno da presupposto all'imputazione generale' (p. vi).

mafia, p. 241). The protagonist, Captain Bellodi, ponders the means by which the mafia may be eradicated:

una eccezionale sospensione delle garanzie costituzionali, in Sicilia e per qualche mese: e il male sarebbe stato estirpato per sempre. Ma gli vennero alla memoria le repressioni di Mori, il fascismo: e ritrovò la misura delle proprie idée, dei propri sentimenti. Ma durava la collera, la sua collera di uomo del nord che investiva la Sicilia intera: questa regione che, sola in Italia, dalla dittatura fascista aveva avuto in effetti libertà, la libertà che è nella sicurezza della vita e dei beni. Quante altre libertà questa loro libertà era costata, i siciliani non sapevano e non volevano sapere'.¹⁶

Bellodi considers that an anti-mafia movement could not only become as repressive as the fascist regime, but that it could also be employed as a political tool, since 'un nuovo Mori diventerebbe subito strumento politico-elettoralistico; braccio non del regime ma di una fazione del regime' (*Il giorno della civetta*, I, p. 465). These are the very concerns that Sciascia expresses during the anti-mafia trials some twenty years later.

Sciascia's consideration of the anti-mafia movement and of the use of *pentiti* brings together his reservations about the methods employed to combat organized crime and his heightened focus on the rights of the individual.¹⁷ His analysis of the maxi-trial is viewed through the microcosm of the Tortora case, and Sciascia argues that 'il sacrificio personale di Tortora era però servito a dare agli italiani un senso che i giudici *potevano fare quello che volevano*, distruggere una persona innocente nella reputazione e negli averi e principalmente, privarla della libertà' (*A futura memoria*, III, p. 769, italics in text). Thus through his

¹⁶ *Il giorno della civetta*, I, pp. 429-30. *Il giorno della civetta* appears in I, pp. 387-483.

¹⁷ Interesting in regard to Sciascia's focus on the rights of the individual is the way in which the protagonist of his 1988 text *Il cavaliere e la morte* reads and re-reads *Robinson Crusoe*: a symbolic text which is not simply about solitude but also about the successful survival of the individual in a hostile environment (*Il cavaliere e la morte* appears in III, pp. 403-465)

engagement with the Tortora case, Sciascia is able to find a voice for his wider concerns and through micro-engagement is able to dialogue with macro-social issues.

Commentary on the *pentiti* trials: The Sofri case

The arrest of Adriano Sofri on the 28th July 1988 elicited written responses from both Sciascia and Tabucchi. Sofri was arrested following claims by the *pentito* Leonardo Marino that Sofri, as head of *Lotta continua*, had orchestrated the murder of Luigi Calabresi in 1972, in retribution for the death of the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli in 1969. Pinelli was questioned over the Piazza Fontana bombing, and his body eventually fell from the window of Calabresi's fourth floor office. Officers claimed he was overwhelmed by guilt, yet their versions of events were contradictory, eliciting claims of torture and of murder. *Lotta continua* led the journalistic campaign against Calabresi, and Calabresi's attempt to sue for defamation of character resulted in the presiding judge condemning the way in which Pinelli's arrest and interrogation were carried out, although declaring that the likely cause of death was 'malore attivo'.¹⁸

Marino's testimony failed spectacularly to convince on any level. Although he claimed to have been the getaway driver in Calabresi's murder, Marino was unable to correctly identify either the car involved or the getaway route. Marino's account of the killing (which he alleged was executed by Ovidio Bompressi), conflicted with eye-witness reports of the incident, and with the

¹⁸ The presiding judge is cited in *La gastrite*, p. 88. For a brief synopsis of the Pinelli case and the Piazza Fontana bombing, see Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 333-34.

police chronology of events. The crucial element of Marino's testimony was that Sofri had ordered the attack on May 13th 1972 at a café (later changed to a street) in Pisa, following a rally. Carlo Ginzburg stresses that it was impossible to prove either the content of the conversation, or indeed whether the meeting took place at all.¹⁹ The nature of Marino's confession further casts doubt on its credibility: for seventeen days before his official *pentimento* Marino held secret, unrecorded, night-time meetings with *carabinieri*; a fact which emerged accidentally at the trial. Despite such a flawed testimony by the only witness, on 2nd May 1990 Adriano Sofri was found guilty of orchestrating the murder of Luigi Calabresi.

Sciascia examines the case in *A futura memoria*, casting doubt on the evidence and also on Sofri's capacity to order such a killing (*A futura memoria*, III, pp. 890-94). Sciascia questions above all Marino's motives, interrogating the relationship between the two men in the intervening sixteen years, questioning whether Marino's sudden remorse was a response to an unsuccessful request for money from Sofri. Sciascia focuses on Sofri as an individual, as a man intelligent enough not to write an article against Calabresi and then to order his murder and as a 'religious' man who would have confessed to the crime had he committed it (Sciascia is careful to stress that intelligence and murder are not mutually exclusive; but that an intelligent man would not make such a glaring mistake). Despite the focus on Sofri as a man, Sciascia uses the trial as he uses Tortora's ordeal; as a prism through which to view the *pentiti* phenomenon as a whole and

¹⁹ Carlo Ginzburg, *Il giudice e lo storico: considerazioni in margine al processo Sofri* (Turin: Einaudi, 1991), pp. 124-29. The above synthesis of the Sofri trial draws heavily on Ginzburg's text, not least because Tabucchi cites it as one of the best analyses of the case in *La gastrite*, p. 49.

indeed, as a way to consider the possibility of successfully implementing justice. Sciascia contextualizes Marino's confession within the framework of the 'leggi che beneficiano i pentiti', and he identifies Marino as 'un personaggio che ha trovato il suo autore nelle leggi sui pentiti' (*A futura memoria*, III, pp. 892-93). The micro-examination of Sofri's trial allows Sciascia to ask the macro-question which colours his examination of the investigations into both the Sofri and the Tortora, desperately enquiring whether 'non è possibile trovare chi, tra chi c'era, un "pentito" che finalmente dica la verità?' (*A futura memoria*, III, p. 892).

Like Sciascia, Tabucchi uses the Sofri trial as a lens through which to debate wider matters, although Tabucchi also views the case through the prism of fiction. Tabucchi analyses the case in *La gastrite di Platone*, a text which explores the role of the intellectual and which is dedicated to Sofri. Tabucchi proposes adopting a literary lens to view Sofri's trial, as this allows the reader to 'cambiare punto di vista per guardare le sue facce', much like geometrical drawings allow a shape to be seen from various angles (*La gastrite*, p. 23). The lens which Tabucchi applies to view this particular case is Umberto Eco's analysis of James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*. Eco's reading of Joyce examines the reversibility of time in Joyce's work, and the changing temporal relationship between cause and effect: instead of there being a simple causal relationship, whereby A causes B, Joyce's revelation of effect modifies the reader's understanding of cause, which is often shrouded in mystery. This concept, Tabucchi argues, may be applied to Sofri's conviction, writing 'e a questo punto la tua vicenda non sarebbe più tanto l'effetto di una causa, quanto,

paradossalmente, la causa postuma di un effetto preventivo (*La gastrite*, p. 26). Tabucchi ironically posits that Sofri's conviction and the arguments used against him in court shed a new light on events which happened years earlier and which at the time seemed entirely innocuous and innocent. In using this literary framework, Tabucchi is able to suggest that Sofri's trial owes more to fiction than to reality, that the claims made by witnesses about the significance (and even existence) of certain events in the past do not belong to the real world, and so highlights the miscarriage of justice. Sofri too, in his own account of his ordeal, views the trial as firmly ensconced in the realm of fiction, noting that 'questa storia è anche un cattivo romanzo', claiming, as Tabucchi does eight years later in *La gastrite*, that the trial is grounded in the imaginary rather than in hard evidence.²⁰

Tabucchi's examination of the case allows micro-engagement with one individual and with one trial, but also 'assume una dimensione molto più vasta' (*La gastrite*, p. 26). The trial, Tabucchi argues, invites reflection on the wider processes of justice at work in contemporary Italy, and the notion that 'l'Italia ha dimostrato di applicare in maniera allarmante una forma di Diritto che non trova riscontro in nessuno Paese della Comunità Europea di cui fa parte' (*La gastrite*, p. 56). Micro-engagement with Sofri's trial does not only lead to wider engagement with Italian legal issues, but also with the concept of repentance and responsibility in a broader sense. Sofri's letters, printed in Tabucchi's text, question whether a State can come to terms with its often violent past, drawing on the examples of post-war Germany, Italy and France, and post-apartheid South

²⁰ Adriano Sofri, *Memoria* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1990), p. 13.

Africa (*La gastrite*, pp. 63-76). Sofri examines this notion of repentance in relation to Italy's recent past, in terms of the strategy of tension, in particular of the Piazza Fontana bombing and of Pinelli's subsequent death, and in terms of *tangentopoli*.²¹ Thus the absence of repentance by 'quest'Italia, che non sa immaginare di chiedere perdono, ma sa esigerlo all'infinito e ritualmente dai battuti e dai deboli', is highlighted in a text which looks primarily at the micro-issue of a man convicted on the problematic evidence of a *pentito* (*La gastrite*, p. 71). Sofri himself notes that the examination of his own trial forces the reader to consider wider issues, writing 'così dal mio odioso e anacronistico processo sono rinviato ad altri argomenti' (*La gastrite*, p. 71). Tabucchi explains in an 'epilogo provvisorio' his desire to de-historicize the trial, as it represents

una vicenda che avviene in Italia ora anche se riferisce all'Italia di allora, e assumendola come fatto in sé, e non come qualcosa che appartenne a un determinato contesto storico, politico, sociale e culturale – limitandosi insomma a considerare non soddisfacente la sua conclusione [...] e a ribadire che la condanna di Sofri, Bompressi e Pietrostefani basata unicamente sulla dichiarazione di un 'pentito' e privo di riscontri obiettivi, o è un errore giudiziario o una devianza giuridica. (pp. 82-83)

Just as Sciascia's micro-engagement with the Sofri trial leads him to comment on the Italian justice system and the use of the *pentiti* as a whole, so Tabucchi's dialogue with the trial broadens out to encompass a range of questions about guilt

²¹ The 'strategy of tension' refers to the involvement of right-wing forces linked to the members of the government, the armed forces and the secret services, in the terrorism which characterized 1970s Italy. These groups sought to instigate a climate of terror in which authoritarian rule would appear acceptable or even desirable. The bombing of Piazza Fontana in Milan in 1969, in which sixteen people died and eighty-eight were wounded, represents the inception of this strategy. See Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, pp. 333-35; Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871-1995* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 385 and Norman Kogan, *A Political History of Italy: The Post-War Years* (New York: Praeger, 1983), pp. 239-40. *Tangentopoli* refers to the widespread revelations of corruption which swept Italy in the early 1990s, in which leaders in all sectors were indicted. See Clark, *Modern Italy*, pp. 414-16.

and civic responsibility in an Italian and a global context. In both cases, the trial serves as a useful starting point for a wider consideration of the notion of justice itself and the possibility of implementing it.

Fictional accounts: Sofri and the *pentiti*

Tabucchi's use of the fictional lens in *La gastrite* is crucial in his depiction of the trial as unjust and devoid of factual evidence. Both writers also use fiction itself as a means of directly engaging with the trial. Indeed, Tabucchi's short story 'Il batter d'ali di una farfalla a New York può provocare un tifone a Pechino?', part of the 1991 collection *L'angelo nero*, and Sciascia's 1988 *Una storia semplice* engage so directly with the case that they were cited at Sofri's appeal in 1991, where Laura Bertolé Viale noted that:

questa diabolica messinscena è anche il contenuto di due racconti pubblicati non a concomitanza con l'inizio del processo di 1° grado- "Una storia semplice" di Sciascia – e di 2° grado - "Può il batter d'ali di una farfalla a New York provocare un tifone a Pechino?" di Tabucchi.²²

'Farfalla' may be read as a metaphor for Leonardo Marino's testimony, or more particularly, the way in which it was formulated during secret meetings prior to the official *pentimento*.²³ The text narrates an encounter between a man known only by his code-name (Signor Farfalla) and a shadowy figure identified only as 'il dottor Coscienza [...] forse la parte più buia della sua coscienza', in a secret and anonymous building, in 'un luogo come un altro, un palazzo come un altro, qui non ci sono targhette sulle porte, questo è un luogo adatto a incontri anonimi,

²² *La gastrite*, p. 12. All page references to *L'angelo nero* refer to the 2002 Feltrinelli edition.

²³ Flavia Brizio-Skov also alludes to the text as a metaphor for Marino's testimony in her book *Antonio Tabucchi: Navigazioni in un arcipelago narrativa* (Cosenza: Pellegrini, 2002), p. 180.

fra amici anonimi come siamo noi'.²⁴ During their meeting, the story of Farfalla's *pentimento* is constructed. We learn first of all what has motivated the *pentimento*, and who. When asked why he is being told to confess to a crime that he (crucially) did not commit, Farfalla is told that the first reason is because he was formerly a member of a revolutionary group, thus the confession will be credible. He is in no position to refuse, as there are other crimes which he could be prosecuted for, such as blackmail attempts and 'commercio', which 'non è propriamente incoraggiato dalla nostra legge', as well as armed robbery executed in the past, when he was 'un entusiasta, un rivoluzionario convinto'.²⁵ Thus Farfalla is left with a very limited choice, as despite his protestations that 'ma io non c'entro nulla con l'omicidio del console straniero [...] voglio dire, sono estraneo al fatto', he is told that 'ma non è estraneo a tutti gli altri fatti di cui le ho parlato prima, scelga lei' (*L'angelo nero*, p. 76). He can either confess to a crime which he did not commit, to help the police, or be prosecuted for crimes which can be proved against him, with no leniency. His confession will be believed, above all because he is 'un infelice. E come tutti gli infelici nutre risentimento' (*L'angelo nero*, p. 76). The story reconstructs how Marino was led to 'repent' after so many years.

The construction of the 'confession' itself takes up the main body of the text. Jeannet sees the text as recounting the questioning as a ruse, whereby:

the accuser is simply interested in the other man's acknowledgement of his own responsibilities, for the questioner is keenly aware that the story has been festering for many years inside the other man, in a remote corner of his memory. Suddenly there is a shift in the dialogue and the

²⁴ *L'angelo nero*, p. 90; p. 76.

²⁵ *L'angelo nero*, p. 74; p. 75.

other man becomes anxious to tell someone what had happened, for the first time in his life. (Jeannet, 'A Matter of Injustice', p. 158)

However I would argue that the story relates the process by which Farfalla is led to become convinced of his guilt, the process by which he re-constructs his memory of the past in line with the version the police wish to portray. Signor Farfalla is asked to imagine what would have happened, if, at the time of the murder of the foreign dignitary, the leaders of his revolutionary group had asked him to act as getaway driver for the killers. The story is built up piece by piece, to include what car might he have chosen, whether he would have driven somebody who was carrying a gun, which route might he have taken if the gunman was going to kill somebody, and what they might have done after the killing in order to escape unnoticed. Farfalla begins to take over the narrative, constructing the story himself rather than simply answering questions. Burns suggests that the dominant tense of the story is the conditional, however the early use of the conditional is gradually replaced by imperfect tense, as the story begins to occupy a real past, at least in Farfalla's mind (Burns, *Fragments*, p. 69). Certain elements of truth begin to become mingled with the hypothesis, such as when Farfalla imagines what he and his accomplice (the gunman) might have done the evening prior to the shooting and is quite convinced that his companion ate two seafood pizzas, as by then he has somebody from the group definitely in mind (the only one he felt could shoot with confidence). The truth is particularly noticeable when he recounts the manner in which he was given the order to become involved in the shooting, when he has to account for a meeting with the two leaders, *i professori*. Farfalla passionately recounts that he met them and asked for money

as he was in financial difficulty and his son was ill, and that they refused his request. The indignation and exclamations inherent in this section of his tale are in sharp contrast to the repetitive, stilted style of the earlier parts of the story, suggesting that this really did happen. He claims that this was the only time that he could have met them, and so even though it would seem unlikely that such an order was given when there were other people around, this real meeting fuses with a fictional order to become involved in a murder.

There are definite parallels between Marino's testimony and the story that Farfalla constructs. As in Farfalla's story, Marino claimed that Sofri had ordered him to be the getaway driver for the Calabresi murder at a rally in Pisa, surrounded by other people. The timing was unlikely, but the only possible time when Marino saw Sofri. Farfalla's claim of requesting money from *i professori* is also reminiscent of the Sofri-Marino relationship, as Sofri was probably assisting Marino financially in the years following *Lotta continua*'s actions, as Sciascia suggests (*A futura memoria*, III, p. 893) Yet although the story draws particularly on the Sofri case, it also addresses the whole issue of the *pentiti* trials, the construction of stories by weak and vulnerable men who may be manipulated by higher authorities into abjuring and incriminating others, to serve the interests of these authorities. In making Farfalla a construct, interviewed by an anonymous man in 'un palazzo come un altro', Tabucchi is able to widen his condemnation of the process as a whole and to illustrate a lack of faith in so many judicial enquiries.

Sciascia's use of fiction to universalize a concept is less grounded in one specific case than that of Tabucchi. His fictionalized account of a *pentito*'s actions is based not in Italy but in Chile, emphasizing that the phenomenon of drawing on former criminals is not confined to Italy, nor indeed to Europe, but part of a wider, troubling, course of action. 'L'uomo del passamontagna', part of the 1985 collection *Cronachette*, narrates events as Muñoz Alcarcon arrives at the Vicariato della Solidarietà in Chile in 1977 to confess that as a former socialist, he had helped the right-wing dictatorship in Chile to identify socialists, who were subsequently exterminated.²⁶ Sciascia compares Alcarcon to the *pentiti* in Italy, both in the way in which he betrays his former associates (firstly the socialists, then his right-wing protectors) and also in his complete failure to show any remorse for his crime. As he recounts his role, Alcarcon describes the event that resulted in his informing as a 'disgrazia' and then 'per la prima volta si accorge che un uomo veramente pentito non può chiamare disgrazia quel che lo ha portato al pentimento, alla confessione' (*Cronachette*, III, pp. 158-59). Sciascia uses the Chilean context to depict the *pentiti*, forcing the reader to consider the phenomenon as a whole. By refusing to work only on one celebrated case, or indeed on only the immediate Italian context, Sciascia is able to focus on the moral ideas behind the issue.

Sciascia's 1989 text, *Una storia semplice* was also cited at the Sofri trial, and this text exemplifies Sciascia's methodology of using fiction to illustrate a general principle through an abstract, which may then be applied to a specific

²⁶ L'uomo dal passamonatga appears in *Cronachette*, in III, pp. 107-63 (pp. 155-60). An earlier version of 'L'uomo dal passamontagna' appeared in *Corriere della sera* in December 1978.

context. This is of course the opposite strategy to that applied by Tabucchi in 'Farfalla', which begins with Sofri's case and works outwards. *Una storia semplice* tells of a *brigadiere*'s investigation into the murder of the aging diplomat Roccella. Roccella had only just returned to his deserted house after years of absence, and almost immediately telephoned the police to say that he had discovered 'una cosa' (*Una storia semplice*, III, p. 735). On the advice of his superior, the *commissario*, the *brigadiere* postpones the visit until the morning, by which time Roccella is found dead. As the investigation develops, the *brigadiere* realizes that the *commissario* is behind the murder and pieces together events to realize that the *commissario* had been using Roccella's empty house to store stolen goods, and had murdered Roccella when the old man had discovered the illicit enterprise on his return. When the *commissario* becomes aware that the *brigadiere* has discovered the truth, he prepares to shoot his subordinate, however the *brigadiere* reacts quickly and shoots first. The event is then passed off as an accident by the *brigadiere*'s superiors, as an unfortunate incident which occurred whilst the *brigadiere* was cleaning his gun.

The story illustrates a high level of police corruption, both in the *commissario*'s clandestine activities and in the subsequent cover-up of the *commissario*'s death. A general picture of incompetence emerges as the text is littered with scathing references to police (in)competency and to the unwillingness of different divisions to work together. The notion of collaboration between the *questura* and the *carabinieri* is dismissed as 'una cosa impossibile, quanto la collaborazione tra un costruttore e un dinamitardo', suggesting that the

efficacy of any investigation is severely compromised (*Una storia semplice*, III, p. 745). Whilst the narrating voice attacks the police, the character of the *professore* calls into question the ethics and capabilities of the magistrate. The magistrate recalls that ‘ero stato piuttosto debole in italiano. Ma, come vede, non è poi stato un gran guaio: sono qui, Procuratore della Repubblica...’, to which the *professore* replies, ‘L’italiano non è l’italiano: è il ragionare [...] con meno italiano lei sarebbe forse ancora in alto’ (*Una storia semplice*, III, p. 751). Sciascia uses the supremely literary tool of irony to undermine official ‘reason’ and to illuminate a more genuine but less accessible truth. Through his fictional account of an investigation, Sciascia challenges the ability of the police to tell the truth about their investigation, and the ability of the judiciary to competently judge the evidence placed before them. These are the same concerns which Sciascia expressed in *A futura memoria*, however in a fictionalized format. In using a fictional lens Sciascia is able to engage with many investigations, rather than one case, and is able to reach a different audience by presenting his ideas in a short, easily digestible detective story.

Fictions: *Damasceno Monteiro*

It is through this format of detective fiction that Tabucchi engages with another issue of injustice and the illicit police activities, but this time in a Portuguese context. Tabucchi’s 1997 text *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro* is based on a human rights case which occurred in Lisbon in 1996. In an end ‘nota’, Tabucchi writes that:

di reale c'è un episodio ben concreto che ha mosso la fantasia romanzesca: la notte del 7 maggio 1996, Carlos Rosa, cittadino portoghese, di anni 25, è stato ucciso in un commissariato della Guardia Nacional Republicana di Sacavém, alla periferia di Lisbona, e il suo corpo è stato ritrovato in un parco pubblico, decapitato e con segni di sevizie. (*La testa*, p. 239)

Tabucchi's text, set in Oporto rather than Lisbon, was written before the case came to trial and represents a re-construction of possible events, coloured by Tabucchi's imagination. The text introduces all manner of fascinating characters into the story of the fictional Damasceno's murder, as the investigative journalist Firmino, sent from Lisbon to Oporto to cover the story, is helped by Manolo the gypsy and Dona Rosa, the landlady of the boarding house where he stays. With Dona Rosa's help, an anonymous informant (Leonel Torres), contacts Firmino and recounts the events he witnessed on the evening that Damasceno was killed. Torres drove Damasceno to 'Stones of Portugal', the import-export company where Damasceno worked, as Damasceno planned to steal a drugs consignment which had been sent via the company for the local drug baron *Il grillo verde*, also known as Sergeant Titânio Silva of the National Guard. Silva catches Damasceno as the young man is escaping with the heroin, beating him violently before he and his henchmen retreat to the local police station with Damasceno in tow. For much of the text, the reader is left to re-construct the sequence of events from Damasceno's departure with the police (the point at which Torres lost sight of Damasceno), to the discovery of Damasceno's decapitated body in a wood at the edges of the city. The reader's suspicions are finally confirmed at the very end of the text, with the emergence of Wanda, a transvestite prostitute who saw glanced

through a window and saw Silva and his associates torture and then kill Damasceno.

As in 'Farfalla', Tabucchi engages with one specific case but uses the individual event as a starting point for wider considerations, and the torture and murder of Carlos Rosa, which brought Amnesty International into Lisbon, provide 'le point de depart d'une réflexion sur la violence et la torture'.²⁷ As the text progresses, Firmino becomes aware that Damasceno's case represents a small stitch in a tapestry of abuse. This is realized primarily through a series of conversations between Firmino and an aging, obese lawyer, known as Loton, as he resembles Charles Laughton.²⁸ Firmino asks Loton to act for the prosecution during Silva's trial, as his newspaper wishes to follow the fortunes of the case once Firmino has discovered that Torres is willing to testify. Initially, Loton is reluctant to take on a new brief as he is occupied with the case of Angela, a prostitute who has been tortured in order to satisfy a customer's whim. Loton's description of the case is telling, as it reveals an underlying view held by many that the poor underclass to which Angela and Damasceno belong are sub-human, expendable and with no recourse to action. Loton explains that:

Angela è una prostituta di Oporto, è stata contattata per fare una serata 'divertente' in provincia, ce l'ha portata il suo protettore, l'hanno condotta in una villa vicino a Guimarães dove c'era un giovanotto benestante che l'ha fatta legare da due scherani e le ha usato violenze fisiche, perché era uno sfizio che si voleva togliere, ma non sapeva con chi farlo, così l'ha fatto con Angela, tanto lei è una puttana. (*La testa*, p. 111)

²⁷ Tabucchi is cited in Arnoud De Liedekerke, 'Antonio Tabucchi le contrebandier', *Magazine Littéraire*, July-August 1997, pp. 154-59 (p. 156).

²⁸ Loton is an interesting figure, living off his inheritance and defending characters from the underclass as a means of compensating for abuses his ancestors committed whilst amassing their fortune.

Through his work with the underclass, Loton seeks to bring justice to those often neglected by the law and to insist on the principles of humanity and of individual responsibility. When Loton hears the details of Damasceno's case, he agrees to take it on, as it represents one instance of police brutality in many. Loton tells Firmino that 'forse lei non sa quante persone sono state uccise o seviziate nei nostri simpatici commissariati negli ultimi tempi [...] e tutti i responsabili assolti, tutti tranquillamente in servizio' (*La testa*, p. 115). A second autopsy reveals cigarette burns on Damasceno's body, leading Loton to muse upon the notion of torture as an evil which transcends time and place, and Loton insists that there is no excuse for torturers to hide behind, as 'la tortura è una responsabilità individuale, l'ubbidienza a un ordine superiore non è tollerabile' (*La testa*, p. 176). Silva's flimsy defence, based on the notion that Damasceno committed suicide whilst the police were out of the room making coffee, is accepted by the court, raising questions about police accountability and a system which protects those in its employ. Through this verdict, Loton's descriptions of other unfortunates and through Loton's contextualization of the case against a history of torture, Tabucchi is able to engage with more abstract notions of ethics. Thus *La testa* dialogues both with the specific case of Carlos Rosa and with wider questions of justice, the ways in which it (fails to be) implemented and with notion of individual responsibility.

Although 'Farfalla' and *La testa perduta* begin with a contemporary event, they are not dependent on the reader knowing the *cronaca* in order to survive as fictions. The characters are fascinating and the plots gripping, ensuring

that the fictions will outlive the memory of the individual cases. Thus the fictionalization process immortalizes the ethical and moral issues raised by a specific instance, whilst inviting comment on the particular trial by contemporaries. Sciascia's fictions function in the opposite way, providing a more abstract and generalized moral framework, rather than beginning from a specific case. The principles outlined in the story may then be applied to a contemporary issue, in a reversal of Tabucchi's methodology. As both Sciascia's *Una storia semplice* and Tabucchi's 'Farfalla' were cited during Sofri's trial, it would appear that their fiction, whether or not they are based on a particular case, offer an effective means of engaging with society.

Investigative reportage: *L'affaire Moro*

Fiction appears as a crucial element in the investigative writings of both authors, since their texts, written over twenty years apart, draw heavily on fictional lenses as they examine factual micro-issues. Of the two investigations that I wish to consider in this section, Sciascia's *L'affaire Moro* (1978) and Tabucchi's *Gli Zingari e il Rinascimento: Vivere da Rom a Firenze* (1999), Sciascia's text is by far the most well-known. *L'affaire Moro* was written in 1978 in response to an accusation by *Paese sera* that Sciascia's silence regarding the case implied implicit support for the *Brigate rosse* (BR).²⁹ Given Sciascia's description of the

²⁹ See Valter Vecellio and Leonardo Sciascia, *La palma va a nord* (Milan: Gammalibri, 1982), pp. 30-31. The BR were one of the left-wing terrorist groups of the 1970s which had grown out of the 1968 protest movement. They were formed as early as the 20th October 1970, describing themselves as 'autonomous workers' organizations', prepared to fight employers on their own terms. In practice this involved the privileging of violent, armed struggle. The group also kidnapped industrial figureheads, the first of whom was Idalgo Macchiarini, a manager of Sit Siemens, who was kidnapped by the BR for some twenty minutes in 1972. Paul Ginsborg outlines

BR as ‘i figli bastardi della nostra indignazione. E anche della nostra viltà’, this did seem a touch unlikely.³⁰ Indeed, Sciascia refuted the claim, and the stance ‘né con lo Stato, né con le Brigate rosse’ was attributed to him. Sciascia himself suggests that ‘contro le Brigate rosse ma non con lo Stato’ offers a more accurate description of his position, and indeed *L’affaire Moro* attests to this belief.³¹ The literary nature of the text is illustrated by the fact that it was perceived more as a *giallo* than as an investigative text (Vecellio, *La palma va a nord*, p. 127). Certainly, the text seems to begin as an old-fashioned story, as Sciascia recalls an evening stroll, where the presence of fireflies calls to mind childhood memories. Marco Belpoliti describes this evocation of an evening walk as ‘una delle pagine più belle dell’opera di Sciascia, forse una delle più belle della letteratura italiana del dopoguerra’, illustrating the extent to which this reportage is ensconced inside literature.³² Thus, in addition to evoking Pasolini’s very pertinent ‘L’articolo delle lucciole’, such an opening firmly roots the analysis in the world of story-telling, where boundaries of fact and fiction are permeable, where all is not as it seems.³³

The Moro case lends itself to the *giallo* form, as it was always a mystery where very few facts were known. All that was definitely known was that on the

the origins and actions of the *BR* in *A History of Contemporary Italy*, pp. 361-63. See also Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968-1978* (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 279-94. For a first hand account of the *BR*, see Mario Moretti, *Brigate Rosse: Una storia italiana. Intervista di Carla Mosca e Rossana Rossanda* (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 2000).

³⁰ Sciascia describes the *BR* in these terms in an interview with Davide Lajolo, in *Conversazione in una stanza chiusa* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 1981), p. 33.

³¹ Sciascia suggests this alternative version in an interview with *Il mattino* in November 1979, which is reproduced in Vecellio, *La palma va a nord*, p. 288.

³² Marco Belpoliti, *Settanta* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), p. 3.

³³ Pasolini’s article appeared in *Corriere della sera* on 1 February 1975, entitled ‘Il vuoto del potere in Italia’. It is reproduced in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Scritti corsari* (Milan: Garzanti, 1975), pp. 160-68, entitled ‘L’articolo delle lucciole’. The article suggests that real power is exerted by unseen forces, a notion which Sciascia’s text goes on to explore in depth.

16th March 1978, Aldo Moro, President of the *Democrazia cristiana* party (DC), was kidnapped at via Fani on his way to Parliament where the new Government of National Solidarity would be inaugurated, bringing the *Partito comunista italiano* (PCI) into government for the first time in Italy. After his car was stopped and his security guards killed, Moro, figurehead of DC power Italy, was taken away to the 'People's Prison' by the Red Brigades to stand trial for the crimes committed by the *Stati Imperialisti Multinazionali* (SIM) in Italy, which the BR believed Moro embodied. The BR communicated with the outside world through letters signed by Moro and through their own communiqués. The BR offered a prisoner exchange – thirteen BR members could be released from prison to save the life of Moro. The DC and PCI followed a policy of *fermezza*, refusing to negotiate with terrorists, and only Craxi's *Partito socialista italiana* (PSI) proposed negotiation. After fifty-five days in the 'People's Prison' Moro was executed and his body left in the boot of car, equidistant between the PCI and DC headquarters in Rome.³⁴

Sciascia's text challenges the claims of the DC that Moro could not be saved, and that Moro the prisoner could no longer be trusted to make decisions. Sciascia calls into question the official story that the BR worked alone, suggesting instead that they were helped by the secret services. Sciascia views the case through a literary lens, as the case gives the 'invincibile impressione che l'affaire Moro fosse già scritto, che fosse già compiuta opera letteraria, che vivesse ormai in una sua intoccabile perfezione' (*L'affaire Moro*, II, p. 477). The specific

³⁴ For an analysis of the Moro kidnapping, see Robert Drake, *The Aldo Moro Murder Case* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995); Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, pp. 384-85.

literary prism that Sciascia selects is particularly revelatory. By viewing Moro through the lens of Borges' writing, Sciascia is able to stress that things may not be as they seem, but rather are constructed behind a smoke-screen. Sciascia cites Borges' *Ficciones* at length, illustrating that the Moro case lies on the border between fact (the events) and fiction (the explanation offered by the ruling powers). Both the length of the quotation from Borges and its positioning, at the end of Sciascia's account, reveal the extent to which Sciascia believes that Borges offers a way of understanding the Moro kidnapping. Sciascia cites:

‘Ho già detto che si tratta di un romanzo poliziesco....A distanza di sette anni, mi è impossibile recuperare i dettagli dell'azione, ma eccone i piani generali, quale l'impoveriscono (quale lo purificano) le lacune della mia memoria. C'è un indecifrabile assassinio nelle pagine iniziali, una lenta discussione nelle intermedie, una soluzione nelle ultime. Poi, risolto ormai l'enigma c'è un paragrafo vasto e retrospettivo che contiene questa frase: "Tutti credettero che l'incontro dei due giocatori di scacchi fosse stato casuale". Questa frase lascia capire che la soluzione è sbagliata. Il lettore, inquieto, rivede i capitoli sospetti e scopre un'altra soluzione, la vera'. (*L'affaire Moro*, II, p. 565)

Sciascia asks the reader to reconsider the Moro case in light of Borges' analysis, and to find 'un'altra soluzione' which challenges the official version. The literary lens does not undermine Sciascia's intent of revealing the truth (or at least a different truth) about the case, but rather furthers it. Sciascia's text does not simply present the confusion and inconsistencies which emerged during the Moro kidnap, in the manner of Giovanni Spadolini's contemporary account or Drake's later investigation.³⁵ Sciascia's use of the literary lens asks the reader to go one step further. By presenting the case as a fiction, he asks the reader to employ the

³⁵ Giovanni Spadolini, *Diario del dramma Moro* (marzo-maggio 1978). *I cinquantaquattro giorni che hanno cambiato l'Italia* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1978); Drake, *The Aldo Moro Murder Case* (1995).

tools of literary analysis and to unpack each statement about the case as if it were a line of literature, questioning the effect the writer (or speaker) is trying to construct and why, examining any possible subtext, investigating the use of language to create specific effects, to evoke certain emotions. In a 1978 interview with *Panorama*, Sciascia explains that ‘insomma *L'affaire Moro* è letteratura, e spero sia buona letteratura, di quella che si fa sentire la verità’.³⁶ The literary lens offers a new way of examining the case, highlighting the inconsistencies and contradictions, so that a picture of lies and corruption emerges over the official story.

Investigative reportage: *Gli Zingari e il Rinascimento*

Tabucchi's use of the fictional lens in *Gli Zingari* is very different, but is equally effective. The text represents an investigation into the conditions facing the Romany immigrants in Florence, many of whom fled the Balkan wars. Although the text is factually based, it is marked from the outset as belonging partly to the literary world. The introductory ‘nota’ explains the genesis of the work, whereby Tabucchi was commissioned by the magazine *Lettre Internationale* to write a reportage ‘su una qualsiasi realtà che a nostro avviso meritasse di essere testimoniata’ (*Gli Zingari*, p. 7). The ‘nostro’ refers to himself and the other writers who had been approached to take on this task. Crucially the magazine contacted literary authors, not journalists, so the project was perhaps not envisaged as straightforward reporting but rather as a means of recounting stories. The storytelling motif remains very strong throughout the text. We are not just

³⁶ The interview from September 1978 is reproduced in Vecellio, *La palma va a nord*, p. 76.

told about the gypsies and their living conditions but also about the personal journey of discovery undertaken by Liuba, Tabucchi's friend who visits him in Florence. Liuba arrives in the city to research Southern European gypsies for her American University, and under Tabucchi's guidance discovers the reality of life for gypsies in Florence. Liuba's path of discovery becomes the reader's and we are introduced to ideas, facts and people as she herself is. Although Liuba is a real person, she appears as an almost literary trope; aside from her function of embodying the reader's consciousness, she emerges as a literary character through her association with Montale. On her arrival she is depicted as 'una Liuba che arriva, al contrario di quella di Montale' (*Gli Zingari*, p. 11). When, like Montale's Liuba she does leave, her departure from Florence railway station has a cinematic quality, with Tabucchi dashing behind the departing train, shouting final messages to her.

Gli Zingari e il Rinascimento offers a harrowing account of the lives of the gypsies in Florence. The starting point is an extract from a study by students in the Political Science faculty at the University of Florence, which examines the living conditions in the Olmatello and Poderaccio *campi di accoglienza*, entitled *L'altro diritto. Emarginazione, devianza, carcere* (*Gli Zingari*, pp. 13-15). The squalor and deprivation of the camps are described in detail and in reproducing the report Tabucchi communicates the hardships to the reader. The account is thorough and covers issues from sanitation to the rundown hovels that the immigrants are 'welcomed' into. However Tabucchi's text does more than simply make this hardship known, in the way that the report does. Tabucchi's text also

makes the hardship felt. The reader is already more drawn into events through the presence of Liuba, as we learn about her reactions as well as the realities for gypsies.

Tabucchi makes the abstract descriptions of the University report immediate and more focused by concentrating his reportage on the experiences of one family. The Krasnich family provide a synthesis of the suffering of the Romany immigrants in Florence, and personalize the persecution endured by their people. Tabucchi takes Liuba to meet the family, who used to live in a *campo di accoglienza* before moving to a no-man's land on the edge of the city. The storytelling motif is developed as Tabucchi insists that the family themselves narrate the tale, only taking over when the young boy Cerim is too overcome by emotion to continue. Tabucchi himself is moved as he recounts how the family was abused, firstly by a young Florentine girl (whom Tabucchi calls 'Julianella'), who was in love with one of the Krasnich sons and then inexplicably disappeared, taking her (and the Krasnich boy's) baby with her. The family then suffered at the hands of the police, who arrested young Krasnich after Julianella claimed to have been abducted and robbed by the family, who had in fact shared their meagre things generously with her, helping all they could. The tale is very private and sorrow permeates the account. Whereas the University report quoted a few comments from the gypsies, such as a young boy's realization that being a gypsy meant 'fare una vita da cani', Tabucchi recounts the experience of storytelling as well as the story itself (cited in *Gli Zingari*, p. 15). The hesitations and reactions

of young Cerim have as much effect as the account itself. The section in which his story begins is even titled 'Cerim comincia ma è triste'. Cerim begins:

'Allora dunque dicevo...Insomma, Tabucchi, devo proprio raccontare la storia?...Ma alla tua amica gli interessa la storia? ...L'anno scorso mio fratello si era innamorato di una ragazza (*risatina*)... È logico, un ragazzo si innamora di una ragazza, no, Tabucchi? (*risatina*)...'. (*Gli Zingari*, p. 37)

This gentle humour and shyness endears Cerim to the reader, so that by the time he has narrated all that he can and is overcome with distress, the reader is more affected. We are drawn into his pain as he recalls the birth of his niece:

e la sua bambina di mio fratello è nata piccolina, piccolina di due mesi indietro di quello che si deve nascere, faceva un caldo, era quasi agosto, io non ho più voglia di raccontare...E insomma mi sento anche un po' triste, vero Tabucchi che sono triste? (*Gli Zingari*, p. 38)

- Cerim, appearing as a character, narrates his tale in an emotional and emotive way, compelling the reader to enter his world for a moment and to engage with his sorrow. Cerim's recurrent appeals to Tabucchi for endorsement and for authority highlight Cerim's sense of vulnerability and insecurity, reinforcing the reader's sense of Cerim's precarious situation. Cerim calls upon Tabucchi (his listener) for support, and as the reader vicariously listens to Cerim's tale, the reader too must choose whether to ignore or to support Cerim's appeals for support.

Tabucchi's own account of the Krasnich family story borrows from literature, alluding to Julianella as Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, in reference to her complete transformation from affection towards the family to curious bursts of hatred. The Jekyll and Hyde metaphor reveals the intensity of her oscillations in character, reinforcing the reader's sympathy for the Krasnich family without

necessarily demonizing Julianella, who is clearly reacting to the difficulties of her situation. Like Dr Jekyll, the situation is of her own making, but no less tragic for that. Tabucchi also alludes to a police raid on the gypsy camp as a 'Joycian epiphany'. The police had ignored all the drug traffickers visiting the camp until one such time when all the young gypsies were high on drugs (a habit they had developed in Florence) and then decided to do a spot-check. Curiously, the Slav dealer of the camp was away at the time, and Tabucchi wonders 'chissà che non abbia avuto una epifania joyciana anche lui?' (*Gli Zingari*, p. 34). Tabucchi's ironic reference to a Joycian epiphany underscores his scepticism towards the police actions. As in Sciascia's *Una storia semplice*, the literary tool of irony is used to undermine official 'reason' and to hint at a more hidden truth.

The literary techniques of Cerim's storytelling, the gradual revelation of events through the character Liuba's eyes, the Jekyll and Hyde metaphor and Tabucchi's irony all serve to heighten the impact of the Krasnich's story on the reader. The Krasnich family offer a representation of the wider hardships faced by the Romany immigrants in Florence, and indeed Italy, and Tabucchi asserts that 'ciò che vale per Firenze, con lievi varianti vale naturalmente anche per altre città italiane' (*Gli Zingari*, p. 9). As in his commentaries, the microcosm provides a way of considering the macrocosm, a means to address wider issues without losing focus on the detail of the individual case.

Some conclusions

My introduction posed two questions regarding Sciascia's and Tabucchi's direct engagement with contemporary affairs; asking to what extent their focus on micro-issues affords dialogue with wider concerns and asking whether their factual and fictional writings should be considered separately, as Jeannet suggests is the case for Tabucchi. For both writers, it appears that whilst engagement with micro-issues is both important and valuable in itself, it does also offer the possibility of extrapolating more general observations from the core issue. Sciascia's and Tabucchi's engagement with the individual *pentiti* trials permits a wider consideration of the notions of (in)justice and of individual responsibility in an Italian and indeed a global context.

The dramas of justice and of police responsibility, issues brought into focus by the *pentiti* trials, are also played out in Sciascia's 'L'uomo dal passamontagna' and *Una storia semplice*. The ethical and moral issues raised in these fictions ask pertinent questions of contemporary events. The reader is entrusted to transfer the principals brought in to focus by the more abstract fictional text to specific contemporary instances. Tabucchi's fictions 'Farfalla' and *La testa perduta* are more firmly rooted in particular cases of *cronaca*, although these also navigate broader issues of power, of justice and of abuse. Thus despite the fact that Tabucchi and Sciascia begin from very different positions, the fictions of both writers offer an engagement with specific issues and with wider ethical questions. The quality of writing in both Sciascia's and Tabucchi's fiction ensure that the texts will outlive the memories of any specific

trials, allowing the moral and ethical concerns to be adapted to future problematic issues.

Although the fictions are (perhaps necessarily) more abstract than the commentaries or reportage of Sciascia and Tabucchi, it is difficult to sanction the notion of dividing the written forms neatly in two, as Jeannet suggests. This is partly due to an overlap in subject matter, and partly (indeed mainly) due to the way in which the factual writing is permeated by literature and by literary lenses. The literary prisms used are diverse and permit the writer to call into question a judgement (in Sofri's trial) or an official version of events (the Moro case) by suggesting it owes more to imaginative literature than to factual evidence. The literary tool of irony permits Sciascia and Tabucchi to undermine and to call into question official versions of 'truth', allowing them to hint at more obscure but more valuable truths. The story-telling motifs of *Gli Zingari* meanwhile afford a closer and more intimate engagement with the Romany immigrants, and as the reader builds a bond of empathy with the 'characters', Tabucchi is able to communicate his message in a stronger and more powerful fashion. The literary devices employed by both writers facilitate a heightened sense of engagement with the reader, whilst simultaneously underscoring their belief in literature as a valuable means of dialoguing with the concerns of society, at both micro- and macro-levels.

Part 2:

Engagement through Spatial Representations

2.1 Theatres of the Past and Present

Sciascia and Tabucchi do not confine their dialogue with contemporary events to direct engagement, but also play out such issues in theatres which they construct; theatres of the past and of the present. Both writers depict issues facing Italy on stages located outside the arena of the peninsular. Sciascia uses Sicilian space as a means of engaging with wider problems facing Italy, whilst Tabucchi explores Italian issues through the prism of Portuguese space. Although the issues which the writers address are very different, as indeed are the spaces which they depict, both Sciascia and Tabucchi nominate France as a counterbalance to their fraught and problematic spaces.

Sciascia's theatre lies in Sicily, in his homeland, which is very clearly delineated from Italy and from northern Europe. Although the value of Sicily as a means of engaging with wider problems remains a constant feature of Sciascia's work, his representation of Sicilian space undergoes significant changes, shifting from a depiction of a concrete and real space, to a portrayal of an empty, metaphorical space, to a representation which lies somewhere between these two extremes. The chapter on Sciascia's engagement through geographical and historical space will chart these shifts, questioning the impact of such changes on his socio-political engagement.

Sciascia's representation of historical space follows a similar pattern, and the chapter will examine the link between the different values with which Sciascia imbues historical space, and the changing socio-political climate. Joseph

Farrell has already positioned Sciascia's historical fiction within the Sicilian tradition, writing that

for the Sicilian writer, the need to investigate the history of the island is related to the urge to understand, to impose order, to locate in the past the roots of the present malaise [...] the historical novel in Sicily has always been an aggressively impure form, which looked to the past not because it was safely dead but because it was menacingly alive.¹

The following chapter will seek to locate Sciascia's historical fiction not only in the Sicilian tradition, but also in the new historiographic methods which developed in the 1970s and 1980s, analysing the extent to which Sciascia's historical fiction may be seen as developing these trends, rather than engaging with the socio-political climate.

Tabucchi's representation of French space is remarkably similar to that of Sciascia. For both writers, France is a space of reason, of justice and of Enlightenment ideals. Tabucchi uses France as a binary opposite to Portugal; an ideal set up in contrast to the more vexed climate of Southern Europe. Tabucchi uses Portugal as an arena in which to play out issues which affect Italy, exploring in particular notions of national identity and of regionalism. The chapter on Tabucchi's engagement through geographical and border spaces will assess the value of Portuguese space as a means of addressing Italian issues, and will seek to position Tabucchi's changing representation of regional and border spaces in the socio-political events of the 1990s. The two chapters together will assess the extent to which Sciascia and Tabucchi afford a sustained engagement with Italian society through spatial representation.

¹ Joseph Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia* (Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 101.

2.2. Representations of Geographical and Historical Space in Sciascia's texts

In 1967 Sciascia wrote that 'tutti i miei libri in effetti ne fanno uno. Un libro sulla Sicilia che tocca i punti dolenti del passato e del presente'.¹ Sciascia's focus on Sicily, both of the past and the present, remained his guiding principle for the following two decades, until his death in 1989. In this chapter I do not simply wish to assert that Sciascia engages with regional and national issues through his representations of Sicily and the past, but seek rather to analyse the ways in which Sciascia's changing depictions of geographical and historical space interact with his engagement. I wish to chart the ways in which a progression from depicting these spaces as 'real' spaces to portraying them as 'conceptual' spaces affects issues with which he engages, and to assess the impact of socio-political events on his choices. I use the term 'real' spaces to signify a representation which offers a visual image of a place or period, in which the reader is able to imagine a physical world in which three-dimensional, tangible figures move, and is able to gain a sense of the daily life in a given period or place. In terms of a theatrical stage, a 'real' space employs vividly evocative scenery and colourful costumes. In contrast, a 'conceptual' space represents a darkened stage on which actors in black costumes play out a drama which does not take place in a given moment or place, except perhaps in name. Texts enacted in 'conceptual' space offer a metaphorical representation of a vexed issue which may be relevant in a wide range of times or places. 'Conceptual' space may also refer to the reduction of a place to an essential idea, in which spaces are used to embody an abstract

¹ Sciascia made this claim in the 1967 preface to his 1956 text *Le Parrocchie di Regalpetra*, which appears in *I*, pp. 1-170. The preface precedes *Le Parrocchie* in *I*, pp. 3-6 (p. 5).

concept such as rationality, rather than representing the reality of daily life for its inhabitants.

Sciascia's trajectory, from depicting real space to conceptual space to a final representation hovering between the two, encompasses his various types of writing. My focus will be on Sciascia's *saggistica* and general fiction, as these texts offer the most marked shift in spatial representation. However, as Sciascia's detective fictions and historical fictions engage with slightly different issues, I will also briefly outline the effect of this trajectory in these specific cases.² My assessment of Sciascia's historical fiction will also encompass an investigation into whether Sciascia's dialogue with socio-political events is affected by methodological innovations in historiography.

Sicily's son

To suggest that Sicily offers a means of understanding Italy sets the two apart, differentiating the region from the nation. Although the notion of a strong regional identity is often taken as a given when we read Sicilian writers, I think the particular strength of Sciascia's view of Sicily as extraneous to both the Italian peninsular and to the European continent is worth stressing, as is his courage in confronting the shortcomings of his birthplace. Sciascia's sense of isolation from Italy is strong enough to overcome blood ties, and he writes that 'mio nonno si chiamava Leonardo, come me; era un gran lombardo alla Vittorini

² Ruth Glynn reminds us that these two forms of writing are often considered in tandem in Sciascia's work, in *Contesting the Monument: The Anti-illusionist Italian Historical Novel* (Leeds: Legenda, 2005), p. 57.

dagli occhi azzurri. (Come io non sono) un settentrionale'.³ Sciascia sees Sicily as situated precariously between Europe and Africa, and in his essay 'Dormire con un occhio solo', he approvingly cites at length Brancati's vision of Sicily's predicament. Brancati outlines the significance of the two winds which embrace Sicily in turn: the cold winter winds from northern Europe which make Sicilians resemble northern figurines in their heavy coats, and the soft summer winds under which the girls take on an Arabic look. Sciascia draws on Brancati's description of the effect of these winds not only on the physical appearance of Sicilians, but also on their psyche:

come questi due venti, una corrente alternata di pensiero attraversa la Sicilia...E quando il pensiero europeo ha portato quaggiù l'inquietudine degli eterni dubbi e dei grandi interrogativi, la mistica Africa ha disteso la sua mano attraverso il Mediterraneo per abbassare le nostre palpebre e addormentarci piano piano...Abituato a queste due *formae mentis*, l'intelligenza siciliana ha acquistato una facoltà di comprendere che nessun europeo e nessun africano ha mai avuto...Tutto ciò che si poteva comprendere, qui si è compreso. Non c'è enigma dello spirito, umanamente solvibile, che un umile siciliano non possa sciogliere...Il popolo più intelligente di Europa.⁴

Although this description of Sicily paints the island and its inhabitants in glowing colours, such a picture does not always emerge from Sciascia's writings. Indeed, his relationship with the island is characterized by a great love tempered by an acute awareness of the island's shortcomings and glaring problems, such as the mafia. The strength of such a polarity emerges in an interview with Marcelle Padovani, in which Sciascia laments that 'oggi, detesto la Sicilia nella stessa

³ Sciascia is cited in Marcelle Padovani and Leonardo Sciascia, *La Sicilia come metafora: Intervista di Marcelle Padovani* (Milan: Mondadori, 1979), p. 12.

⁴ Sciascia's essay forms the preface to Vitaliano Brancati, *Opere 1932-1946*, ed. by Leonardo Sciascia (Milan: Bompiani, 1987), pp. vii-xxii (pp. vii-viii). Brancati first published this description in *Lunario siciliano* in July 1929.

misura in cui l'amo. [...] Qui sono nato, e pertanto condannato ad amarla'.⁵

Sciascia's willingness to tackle and to engage with the problems in Sicily cost him dearly, as he feels bound by love to the island of his birth. As he condemns the injustices around him, Sciascia is aware that

li vedo con dolore e 'dal di dentro'; il mio 'essere siciliano' soffre indicibilmente del gioco di massacro che persegua. Quando denuncio la mafia, nello stesso tempo soffro poiché in me, come in qualsiasi siciliano, continuano a essere presenti e vitali i residui del sentire mafioso. Così, lottando contro la mafia io lotto anche contro me stesso, è come una scissione, una lacerazione. (Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, p. 74)

Sciascia's willingness to engage with the problems inherent in Sicilian society becomes even more startling, as he has to confront not only his own emotional pain in doing so, but also the hostility of fellow Sicilians, who feel that any admission of flaws in the island constitutes a betrayal of Sicily and Sicilians.⁶

Santi Correnti's *La Sicilia di Sciascia* represents a particularly hostile reaction to Sciascia's writings on Sicily, in which Correnti claims that 'non c'è una sua opera in cui egli non ha versato fango – con la scusa di fare del moralismo a buon

⁵ Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, p.118. Sciascia makes similar declarations in an interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur* in 1978, explaining that 'il mio rapporto con la Sicilia appartiene più all'ordine del risentimento. Io sono nato in questa terra e la vivo come una sofferenza, senza amarla, forse, ma al di là dell'amore che tanti siciliani pretendono di aver per essa'. This interview is reproduced in Valter Vecellio and Leonardo Sciascia, *La palma va a nord* (Milan: Gammalibri, 1982), p. 49.

⁶ One of the central aims of the prosecution in the 1986 maxi-trial was to ascertain that the mafia did exist, after decades of Sicilian denial. John Dickie argues that an admission that the Buscetta theorem was correct (Buscetta claimed that the mafia functioned as a single, unified, structure), 'flew in the face of profoundly rooted assumptions about the mafia, and about what it meant to be Sicilian'. Dickie asserts that many Sicilians refused to admit to the existence of the mafia, preferring to claim it was an invention of hostile outsiders, seeking to discredit Sicily and Sicilians. John Dickie, *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2004), p. 394. For an analysis of the anti-mafia trials, see also G. Fiandaca and S. Costantino, eds., *La mafia, le mafie* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1994), pp. v-xvi; Paul Ginsborg, *L'Italia del tempo presente: Famiglia, società, stato 1980-1996* (Einaudi: Turin, 1998), pp. 360-63; Salvatore Lupo, *Storia della mafia: Dalle origini ai giorni nostri* (Rome: Donzelli, 1993), pp. 239-321. Pino Arlacchi's *Addio Cosa nostra: La vita di Tommaso Buscetta* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1994), offers an account of the *pentiti* trials from the perspective of Tommaso Buscetta, the first *pentito*.

mercato- sulla cultura, sul popolo, sulle classi sociali, sullo spirito dei siciliani'.⁷ Asking 'che Dio lo perdoni!', Correnti seeks to redress each of Sciascia's criticisms of the island (Correnti, *La Sicilia di Sciascia*, p. 5). Perhaps unfortunately for Correnti, his zeal at times works against him, and the reader is forced to conclude that Sciascia's critiques seem rather more verisimilar than Correnti's assertions that Sicily is a virtuous, religious, island in which 'durante la Settimana Santa, e segnatamente nei giorni di venerdì e sabato, nessuno in Sicilia si azzarda a commettere azioni cattive o moralmente condannabili (non si bestemmia neppure, e perfino le sale cinematografiche restano chiuse!)' (Correnti, *La Sicilia di Sciascia*, p. 19). Sciascia's courage in confronting both his own emotions and reprobation from his fellow islanders as he engages with Sicily's ills should not be underestimated.

Sciascia is clearly willing to engage with Sicily's problems at a local level. However, in order for him to use Sicily as a theatre in which to address broader concerns, Sciascia must be able to contextualize the island experiences in a wider framework. In 1978, Sciascia states that:

c'è stato un progressivo superamento dei miei orizzonti, e poco alla volta non mi sono più sentito siciliano, o meglio, non più solamente siciliano. Sono piuttosto uno scrittore italiano che conosce bene la realtà della Sicilia, e che continua a essere convinto che la Sicilia offre la rappresentazione di tanti problemi, di tante contraddizioni, non solo italiani ma anche europei, al punto di poter costituire la metafora del mondo odierno. (Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, p. 78)

⁷ Santi Correnti, *La Sicilia di Sciascia: Il edizione accresciuta, con l'aggiunta di "Altre Sciascerie" e di scritti antisciasciani di autori siciliani* (Catania: Giannotta, 1987), p. 32. Correnti published a shorter version of the text in 1977, adding new material to the 1987 version. That he returned to the work after a decade represents the depth of Correnti's opposition to Sciascia's depiction of Sicily.

Sciascia slightly revises this interpretation three years later, asserting instead that 'quel che io considero un superamento dei miei orizzonti sia piuttosto un'espansione dell'oggetto Sicilia. Tante cose che si ritenevano peculiarmente e limitatamente siciliane sono diventate italiane e europee: deteriormente'.⁸ In both cases, Sciascia describes a shift in his perception of Sicily; a shift which I suggest affects his spatial representation of the island.

The early texts

In Sciascia's early texts, Sicily appears as a real, geographical space, populated by fascinating characters intrinsically connected to their local environment. This is exemplified by Sciascia's first full length text, *Le Parrocchie di Regalpetra*, in which he engages with the crushing poverty and horrendous working conditions facing many Sicilians. Sciascia wrote the text in 1956, when he was a schoolmaster in Sicily. As part of his teaching duties, Sciascia had to write an annual report. As he describes in his 1967 preface to *Le Parrocchie*, the report constituted 'appena una colonna per tutto un mese: ed è, come tutti gli atti di ufficio, un banale resoconto improntato al *tutto va bene*' (*Le Parrocchie*, I, p. 3, italics in text). Sciascia decided to pen 'una più vera cronaca dell'anno di scuola che stava per finire', which eventually became the essay 'Cronache scolastiche' (*Le Parrocchie*, I, p. 3). Following encouragement from Italo Calvino and from

⁸ Davide Lajolo and Leonardo Sciascia, *Conversazioni in una stanza chiusa* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 1981), p. 17.

Vito Laterza publishing house, Sciascia developed this essay into a full-scale book, entitled *Le Parrocchie di Regalpetra*.⁹

The village of Regalpetra is to some extent a construct, a fiction, in as much as it is not named on any map of Sicily. The name Regalpetra is an amalgamation of Racalmuto (Sciascia's own village), which was originally called Regalmuto, and Nino Savarese's *Fatti di Petra*, to which Sciascia wished to pay homage (*Le Parrocchie*, I, p. 4). However Regalpetra represents a real geographical space and, as Sciascia asserts in the text:

esistono in Sicilia tanti paesi che a Regalpetra somigliano; ma Regalpetra non esiste. Esistono a Racalmuto, un paese che nella mia immaginazione confina con Regalpetra, i salinari; in tutta la Sicilia ci sono braccianti che campano 365 giorni, un lungo anno di pioggia e di sole, con 60.000 lire; ci sono bambini che vanno a servizio, vecchi che muoiono di fame, persone che lasciano come unico segno del loro passaggio sulla terra [...] un'affossatura nella poltrona di un circolo. (*Le Parrocchie*, I, p. 10)

The fact that *Le Parrocchie* documents a reality lived by many Sicilians is attested to by the number of letters of support that Sciascia received following the publication of the 'Cronache scolastiche'. Sciascia writes that:

credevo di aver trascritto in esse i dati di una particolare esperienza, non pensavo condizioni simili si riscontrassero in altre parti della Sicilia, anche in città come Palermo e Catania. Il consenso che colleghi siciliani mi manifestarono, che tutto quel che avevo scritto era vero, e che avevo avuto il coraggio di scriverlo, in un certo senso mi sorprese. (*Le Parrocchie*, I, p. 123)

Sciascia's personal representation of a reality he had experienced in a specific locality was recognized and responded to widely as the articulation of a common

⁹ Sciascia outlines the genesis of the text in his 1967 preface (*Le Parrocchie*, I, p. 3). Claude Ambroise defines *Le Parrocchie* as a 'controcrittura' to the annual report in his text *Invito alla lettura di Sciascia* (Milan: Mursia, 1974), p. 44.

reality, as the 'real' Sicily. In this way the microcosm of *Le Parrocchie* engages with widespread problems in Sicily.

The text seeks to depict various aspects of daily life in a Sicilian village, encompassing work, education, religion, local politics and leisure time. As such it constitutes an almost sociological account of village life. Claude Ambroise sees the task of *Le Parrocchie* as being to amass 'una raccolta di informazione: il lettore sa quanto guadagna un salinario, il reddito di un piccolo terriero, le somme distribuite dall'ECA ecc' (Ambroise, *Invito*, p. 78). The text looks at the life of the village as a whole, balancing, as Joseph Farrell has noted, the portrayal of the poor and the vulnerable (schoolchildren and miners) with a portrait of the powerbrokers of the village, embodied by the clergy and by politicians.¹⁰ Characters are intrinsically connected to the spaces in which they are portrayed, from the *circolo* where the gentlemen relax to the mines or the schoolroom.

The schoolchildren are represented as a product of their environment. Their primary focus at school is conditioned by their poverty at home, both in terms of their ability to concentrate and their academic progress. Thus as Sciascia teaches, he laments that 'io parlo loro di quel che produce l'America, e loro hanno freddo, hanno fame; e io dico del Risorgimento e loro hanno fame, aspettano l'ora della refezione, giocano per ingannare il tempo' (*Le Parrocchie*, I, p. 105). This inability to concentrate ensures that many must repeat the year. Their academic progress is not determined by intelligence, but rather by 'una povertà stagnante e disperata' (*Le Parrocchie*, I, p. 104). Sciascia depicts the way in which the immediate reality of daily life shapes their expectations and

¹⁰ Joseph Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 45.

experiences. He recounts the boys' experiences of Christmas day, detailing the joy of one little boy who discovered that his mother has prepared hot water to wash with, and the despair of his school-fellow who returns home after having won two hundred lire playing with friends and cousins, only to have his father take the money away to spend in a bar. Sciascia concludes that 'non ho mai letto niente di più triste delle cronache, spesso desolate, che i ragazzi mi fanno delle loro giornate' (*Le Parrocchie*, I, p.169). Through depicting the effect that the harshness of daily life exerts on the schoolchildren, Sciascia is able to engage with issues of poverty and brutality in Sicilian villages.

The lives of the salt miners is similarly conditioned by their immediate surroundings, and Sciascia details the diet, working conditions and health hazards of working in the salt mines, where the humidity occasions 'dolore di ossa' (*Le Parrocchie*, I, p. 130). The geography of the town shapes its workplace and also the attitudes, as the hard physical work perhaps influences the approach that the miners take to life. In *La Sicilia come metafora*, Sciascia explains that the landscape and social reality of Sicily acted as a crucial force in shaping its writers; that without the sulphur mines western Sicily would not have produced writers such as Pirandello, Nino Savarese and himself (Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, p. 81). The mines and landscape have shaped not only Sicily's writers but also all Sicilians, hence his description of the mines plays an important role in representing the village.

The text, however, is not a mere sociological analysis and is populated by fascinating characters who bring the work to life. The appearance of the local

pazzi at the *circolo* help to ground the more generic portrayal of the political debates and opinions. One *pazzo* is convinced that his nine thousand verse poem on why the Earth does not move will sooner or later win the Nobel prize, whilst another is convinced that this 'poet' is a genius. Individuals such as Don Fernando, who alternates between ranting at the uselessness of the youth of today and praising his son who gives free lessons at the local night school, animate the portrayal of the village. Throughout the text, the reader is faced with a definite reality, a living, breathing town, rooted in its geography, its history, its economic reality and its local characters. The reader is able to mentally stroll around Regalpetra, taking in the atmosphere of a Sicilian village. This depiction of Sicilian space allows Sciascia to engage with the problems of poverty facing children and the miners, whilst simultaneously keeping the reader entertained through his portrayal of colourful characters such as the local *pazzi*. His representation of a village, grounded in its geographical space, permits an engagement with specifically local problems and inequalities.

Grounding his early texts in real Sicilian space does not prevent Sciascia from commenting on wider concerns. Just as his account of a village schoolroom addresses issues pertinent to the whole of Sicily, so his account of a Sicilian cobbler's disillusionment in *La morte di Stalin* engages with the bewilderment of communists across Europe.¹¹ The story recounts Calogero's attempts to reconcile Stalin's more questionable actions with his own veneration of the Soviet leader, and his attempts to justify events which seem increasingly inexplicable, such as

¹¹ *La morte di Stalin* appears in *I*, pp. 223-255. It forms part of the collection *Gli zii di Sicilia*, first published in 1958 and re-published in 1961 with the additional story *L'antimonio*.

the Nazi-Soviet pact. Although Calogero's experience is symbolic of the multitudes who long to believe in 'lu zu Peppi', the text is firmly grounded in local settings (*La morte*, I, p. 240). Calogero lives in Regalpetra, and the reader may perhaps be expected to mentally transfer the detail of *Le Parrocchie* to the account of Calogero's emotional adventures. Much of Calogero's reflection takes place in his *bottega* or in his home, and when he does venture further afield to Caltanissetta, this new space is colourfully evoked as emanating 'lo stesso odore di cavoli bolliti e di uova marce' (*La morte*, I, p. 240). Sciascia's early texts, rooted in a real geographical space, engage primarily with the harsh conditions of the island, and the aspirations of some islanders, but are still relevant to a wider audience.

A conceptual Sicily: *Candido*

Throughout the 1970s, Sciascia's texts move towards a representation of Sicily as a more conceptual space, a more constructed entity. Local detail and colour fade from the texts, which increasingly function as plain backdrops for metaphorical plots of intrigue, corruption and power. The shift is evidenced linguistically by the elimination of Sicilian dialect from texts. Although dialect never features as prominently in Sciascia's texts as in the works of some other Sicilian writers, it nonetheless serves to remind the reader of the precise location and locality of the characters and of the texts themselves.¹² Sciascia himself has noted this decline,

¹² The limited presence of dialect in Sciascia's texts becomes apparent when they are compared to Andrea Camilleri's novels, such as *La forme dell'acqua* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1994) and *L'odore della notte* (Palermo: Sellerio, 2001). Dialect dominates both the dialogue and the narrative voice of Camilleri's novels.

pointing to the difference between *Le Parrocchie* (1956), in which dialect features quite prominently in certain sections, and *Todo modo* (1974), by which time dialect is conspicuous by its absence.¹³ Sciascia's 1977 text *Candido* represents perhaps the pinnacle of Sciascia's use of Sicily as conceptual space, as a blank canvas against which to explore issues affecting the wider world.¹⁴ Designating *Le Parrocchie* as representative of Sciascia's early texts, and *Candido* as the embodiment of his second wave of writing, essentially reduces analysis to a comparison of the representation of Sicilian space in two texts. This is clearly a vexed comparison, as the chronicle format of *Le Parrocchie* lends itself more readily to a representation of real space than the philosophical *conte*, *Candido*. However, as Claude Ambroise observes, both texts are narrated from the 'prospettiva dello storiografo e cioè del narratore di cose viste'.¹⁵ As such, a comparison of the particular way in which these 'cose viste' are portrayed offers a useful means of gauging Sciascia's spatial representations.

Although *Candido* is set in Sicily, there is very little, aside from the subtitle *Ovvero un sogno fatto in Sicilia*, and the occasional mention of a town, to

¹³ Sciascia makes this observation in Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, pp. 77-78. *Todo modo* appears in *II*, pp. 97-203. In interviews with Domenico Porzio during 1988 and 1989, Sciascia explained that dialect 'consente di raggiungere la madre', but that 'nessun' opera di pensiero può essere scritto in dialetto'. Leonardo Sciascia and Domenico Porzio, *Fuoco all'anima: Conversazione con Domenico Porzio* (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), p. 4.

¹⁴ *Candido* appears in *II*, pp. 347-461. When discussing conceptual space, *Il contesto* is frequently cited as the apogee of Sciascia's texts (*II*, pp. 1-96): Aldo Budriesi stresses that the setting of *Candido* may be assumed as Sicilian, in *Pigliarsi di lingua: Temi e forme della narrativa di Leonardo Sciascia* (Rome: Effe, 1986), p. 46. My focus here remains on *Candido*, as the latter is clearly nominated as set in Sicilian space, whereas Sciascia insists that *Il contesto* is set in 'un paese del tutto immaginario', which is then construed as a metaphor for Sicily (*II*, p. 96). *Candido* represents an opportunity to analyse Sicilian space which may be extrapolated outwards, as opposed to a metaphorical space which must be assumed to represent Sicily, thus inverting the process.

¹⁵ Claude Ambroise, 'Sciascia: Lo storiografo e il giallo', *Narrativa*, 2 (1992), 131-39 (p. 135).

identify it as such. The Sicily which the protagonist inhabits is unreal, a space of ideas rather than of geography. The reader does not have a visual image of the Sicily which Candido inhabits. During his time in Sicily, Candido is faced with a series of major ideologies, including post-war democracy, psychoanalysis, communism, religion and reason, and finds them all wanting. Sicily is a plain white backdrop against which these dramas are played out, without ever giving any sense of real space. Candido's birth sets the tone for the text: his birth is symbolic, occurring on the night in which General Patton's troops land in Sicily. Hence Candido is born at the end of Fascism, at the beginning of a new era. Had he been born 12 hours previous, he would have been named Bruno, after Mussolini's son. Instead he is named Candido; 'come una pagina bianca, il nome Candido: sulla quale, cancellato il fascismo, bisognava imprendere a scrivere vita nuova' (*Candido*, II, p. 350). Such a new life could never materialize, as is embodied by the experience of Candido's grandfather. This ex-fascist official transforms himself into a pillar of the new democratic society, elected as a Christian Democrat (DC) deputy, yet renouncing none of his old ideas (*Candido*, II, p. 356).

The ideologies of Communism and Catholicism are explored in this constructed space. The two are paired to underscore their mutual failure; thus when the Archbishop Lepanto leaves the Church and joins the Communist party (PCI), he is seen as passing 'da una Chiesa a un'altra'.¹⁶ Catholicism is shown to be flawed in this metaphorical space of Sicily, as Sicily appears as a site of old-

¹⁶ *Candido*, II, p. 408. In *Fuoco all'anima*, Sciascia suggests that the Church and Communism are linked as both offer hope (Porzio, *Fuoco all'anima*, p. 53).

fashioned superstition, embodied by 'il funebre zelo religioso, il continuo e meticoloso culto dei morti e della morte, le oscure credenze e penitenze' of Candido's nurse, Concetta (*Candido*, II, p. 374). The true principles of Christianity, of how Christ represents 'la via; la verità e la vita' do not exist in Candido's Sicily, to the extent that Archbishop Lepanto declares that in Sicily, Christ represents 'il vicolo cieco, la menzogna e la morte' (*Candido*, II, p. 391). The Communist party meanwhile is shown to be corrupt, bereft of even the most minimal understanding of the principles of its founders. Candido is expelled from the party after offering to freely give away his land so that a hospital may be built and that peasants may start a collective. Candido retreats to tend his garden, a solution which worked for his namesake, however even this project fails in Sicily, and he abandons the land; both his fields and the country itself.¹⁷

The text then, seeks to illustrate, chapter by chapter, that all of the belief systems in Sicily cannot work, mainly due to small-mindedness, corruption and pettiness. Claude Ambroise argues that in *Candido*, 'ogni capitolo è la manifestazione, grazie a un episodio preciso, delineato con incisiva precisione, di come funziona una società in presa alle sue ideologie'.¹⁸ Sicily becomes a metaphor for the failure of ideologies throughout the world. Its metaphorical role is clear not only in the lack of detail about Sicilian space, but also by the brief account of Candido's experiences further afield. These short episodes repeat the ideological failures which have been played out in depth in Sicilian space,

¹⁷ Voltaire's *Candide* ends on Candide's reflection that 'il faut cultiver notre jardin'. Voltaire, *Candide* (Paris: Larousse, 1998), p. 189.

¹⁸ Claude Ambroise, 'A che serve il Settecento in Sciascia?', in *Leonardo Sciascia ed il Settecento in Sicilia: Atti del Convegno di studi, Racalmuto, 6 ed 7 dicembre 1996*, ed. by Rosario Castelli (Caltanissetta-Rome: Salvatore Sciascia, 1996), pp. 35-45 (p. 43).

reiterating the function of Sicily as a construct. Thus workers in Turin claim that Sicilian communism is an aberration, yet admit that in the event of a Soviet invasion of Italy they would flee to Canada or to France rather than submit to the rule of the Motherland (*Candido*, II, p. 446). Similarly, in Spain, Candido and Francesca witness the Maoist Chinese Ambassador paying homage to Franco's victory, whilst in Egypt they learn that Russian technicians are helping a government which suppresses communism. Farrell argues that 'Sciascia's feelings for Sicily amounted to monomania, causing him at times to view other countries and cultures not for their own sake but for the insights they offered into Sicilian life' (Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 35). In *Candido*, however, this process seems to be reversed, as the constructed space of Sicily offers a way of understanding more global issues. Problems which are played out at length in the metaphorical constructed space of Sicily are shown to be symbolic of issues confronting society at large. In representing Sicily as a constructed space, Sciascia is able to explore the crisis of ideologies on a global level.

The French Connection

Interestingly, the one country which does not figure as conceptual space in *Candido* is France. Although don Antonio (the former Archbishop Lepanto) arrives in Paris and wants to eat and drink 'secondo letteratura' before stopping to pray at the statue of Voltaire, for Candido and Francesca the city is a place in which they can live and be happy, rather than representing a metaphorical construct (*Candido*, II, p. 455). At the end of the text, Candido refuses to venerate

the statue of Voltaire, symbolically denying France's role as bastion of reason and liberty. That Paris should appear in such a way in a text which wholly conceptualizes Sicilian space is fascinating, as elsewhere France (and in particular Paris), is used as a metaphor, a polar opposite to Sicily. In Sciascia's second wave of spatial representation, Sicily and France appear as constructs, as embodiments of an ideology or of a specific way of viewing the world. The nations are whittled away, detached from their inhabitants and landscape, until they represent code words for a particular vision.

Sciascia's childhood images of France were based on his friend's erotic French postcards and on his teacher's constant lament when pupils left the door open that 'a Parigi i cani chiudono la porta con la coda'.¹⁹ In later life, France comes to embody the ideals of the Enlightenment, with Paris in particular constructed as 'il luogo dove le poche persone che pensano con maggior forza e giustizia delle altre riescono, da tre secoli, a far sentire la loro voce' (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1278). Thus for Sciascia, France comes to represent Sicily's foil, as each is reduced to embody a particular concept. Sicily is a 'non società' in its failure to embrace justice, freedom and reason, characteristics which define Sciascia's constructed France (Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, p. 5). In her introduction to *La Sicilia come metafora*, Marcelle Padovani argues that 'tutta la sua opera è piena della realtà siciliana intesa come luogo della non-ragione (e quindi opposto a Parigi, una Parigi mitica, immutata sin dal XVII secolo, che sarebbe invece il luogo della ragione)' (Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, p. ix). Her assessment, as Mark Chu has shown, recognizes that the depiction of Paris as

¹⁹ *Cruciverba*, II, p. 1270. *Cruciverba* appears in II, pp. 965-1282.

bastion of reason is based in myth, although Padovani curiously accepts without question Sciascia's topos of Sicily as 'luogo della non-ragione'.²⁰

Sciascia constructs his vision of this mythical France through the evocation of literature; notably Voltaire; Bayle; and Diderot. France does not appear as a real space but as 'una città-libro, una città scritta, una città stampata', where even the architecture is inscribed with literature, becoming 'una cronaca di pietra, una storia di pietra, un libro di pietra'.²¹ Sciascia constructs his bi-polar Europe, consisting of France and Sicily, precisely through this notion that architecture and written texts combine to embody a cultural hegemony. In his essay 'Villa Palagonia', Sciascia views Sicily as embodied by the grotesque statues at Villa Palagonia, erected between 1747 and 1789 by Ferdinando Francesco Gravina and Salvatore Gravina Cottone.²² In contrast, the idea of France is constructed through references to the dictionary projects of the Enlightenment. Sciascia bitterly observes that 'tra il dizionario di Bayle e quello di Voltaire, nel sonno della ragione, la Sicilia produceva il suo: di mostri, di superstizioni, di mistiche depravazioni, di *mondo alla rovescia*' (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1039, italics in text). The construct of Sicily as 'luogo della non-ragione' is highlighted and exemplified through the contrast with its polar opposite, equally a construction. In representing Sicily and France as constructs, Sciascia is able to engage with the same concerns which he addresses in his representation of Sicily

²⁰ Mark Chu, 'Sciascia and Sicily: Discourse and Actuality', *Italica*, 75, no. 1 (Spring 1998), 78-93 (p. 84). Chu suggests that Sciascia's topos of Sicily needs to be questioned and unpacked, with a recognition that Sciascia's representation of Sicily is not objective, but rather draws on emotions and on literature.

²¹ *Cruciverba*, II, p. 1274; p. 1276. In *Fuoco all'anima* Sciascia recounts that 'Parigi è una forma di felicità. La amo per la sovrapposizione della città letteraria alla città reale' (Porzio, *Fuoco all'anima*, p. 62).

²² The essay appears in *Cruciverba*, II, pp. 1032-40.

as a real space, however from a different angle. Instead of analysing the day-to-day problems of Sicily, through his representation of Sicily as constructed space Sciascia is able to search for an overarching metanarrative to discover why such problems exist, both in Sicily and further afield.

The third and final wave

At the end of his life, Sciascia appears to lose faith in constructed space as the most effective way to engage with Sicily's problems. This is exemplified by his 1989 collection of essays, *Fatti diversi di storia letteraria e civile* (III, pp. 515-727). The opening essay, 'Come si può essere siciliani?' (*Fatti diversi*, III, pp. 519-24), rejects essentialism as a means of understanding Sicily's culture and people, and stresses instead the importance of Sicily's writers as a key to understanding the island. Sciascia writes that:

più sicuro è affidarsi alla letteratura, agli scrittori che ne hanno rappresentato la vita, il modo di essere, nella mobilità della reale e nella varietà dei personaggi. E per la Sicilia a Verga, Capuana, De Roberto, Pirandello, Brancati, Tomasi di Lampedusa, Bonaviri, Consolo: per nominare solo alcuni in una tradizione ricca, intensa, coerente'. (*Fatti diversi*, III, p. 522)

The text appears to suggest that constructed, literary space, based on Sicily's literary heritage, offers the best way to engage with the island. The opening essay certainly seems to justify Mark Chu's assertion that Edward Said's *Orientalism* offers a valid way of reading Sciascia's representation of Sicily. Citing Said, Chu argues that Sciascia's practice of using literary texts to represent the island ensures that:

it is less a place than a topos, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origins in a quotation, or a fragment of text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient, or some bit or previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these.²³

Both Sciascia's manifesto at the beginning of *Fatti diversi*, and Chu's reading of Sciascia's means of constructing Sicily, offer valuable tools for understanding Sciascia's second wave of spatial representation, in which he depicts Sicily as a construct. Yet contrary to expectations established by Sciascia's opening essay, the rest of the text does not focus solely on literary representations of Sicily but instead concentrates more on the context in which the texts were written, drawing on historical and geographical information to supplement the depiction offered by texts.

The essay 'I luoghi del *Gattopardo*' (*Fatti diversi*, III, pp. 618-625) uses Lampedusa's text as a starting point from which to explore the more factual elements of the geographical locations and the historical characters who influence the characters and settings of Lampedusa's *Il gattopardo*, such as Sister Maria Crocifissa, who is reincarnated as Lampedusa's La Beata Corbera (*Fatti diversi*, III, pp. 620-21). Despite his theoretical insistence on the literary construct alone as informing the reader, Sciascia's own text focuses on the real geographical and historical space which inspired the construct. Sciascia's essay 'C'era una volta il cinema' (*Fatti diversi*, III, pp. 635-41) further brings into question his opening claim that conceptual space offers the best means of understanding Sicily. The essay represents an affectionate portrayal of the early cinema in Racalmuto, in

²³ Chu, 'Sciascia and Sicily', p. 79. Chu notes that the way in which Sciascia constructs Sicily through fragments written by Sicilians rather than outsiders complicates the notion of Orientalist discourse.

which the village appears as a real space, as Sciascia describes the cinema building itself, the local characters and the ways in which audiences responded to films. In this essay Sciascia returns to a depiction of everyday life, much like that of *Le Parrocchie*, as a way of supplementing information supplied by literary constructs.

In fact, the very notion of using literary analyses as a tool to understand Sicily is inherently undermined by the essay 'Stendhal e la Sicilia', which is importantly placed at the end of the collection, and so perhaps represents Sciascia's final word on the topic (*Fatti diversi*, III, p. 696-722). This essay, as the title suggests, details Stendhal's relationship with Sicily. The crucial feature of this relationship is that Stendhal never actually visited the island, despite writing about it as if he had. In his essay, Sciascia details various occasions on which Stendhal claimed to be in Sicily yet was easily traceable elsewhere; in France or in the North of Italy. Stendhal's ideas of Sicily were based on the tales of an Aunt and on the writings of Michele Palmieri, yet appear to give his own impressions. The literary representation of Sicily, Sciascia seems to be suggesting, bears no relation to the island itself. Although Sciascia's opening essay in the collection stresses the importance of literary constructions of Sicily, his own focus ranges further afield to supplement these constructions and his final essay appears to call into question the value of constructed space as a whole.

A balance between the representation of Sicily through literary, constructed space and real, geographical space is also evident in the 1985 text *Per un ritratto dello scrittore da giovane*, in which Sciascia details the youth of

Giuseppe Borgese (*III*, pp. 165-198). Sicily is represented both through the cultural development of Borgese and through the tangible, physical, experiences and relationships which coloured the young writer's life. Much of the text focuses on cultural debate, as Sciascia analyses Borgese's relationships with D'Annunzio and with Croce. Borgese's interaction with the literary journals of the time is detailed through the course of the text and offers a snapshot of cultural ideas in Sicily at the time, as do the letters that Borgese writes to his uncle, in which he reviews new texts which are published and explains his responses to the general reception of these works. However Sciascia also draws on more tangible representations of Sicily, often representing the island through food, as Sciascia explains why 'pasta al burro' and eggs were such a speciality on the island, and describes the various cakes of the region.²⁴ The text also defines Borgese's relationship with his father, characterized by 'una rigorosa assenza del confidenza', as typically Sicilian (*Ritratto, III*, pp. 189). The text portrays Sicily through culture but also turns to family life and food to complete the portrait, offering a balanced vision.

Sciascia's engagement with Sicilian issues is less clear-cut and apparent in these final texts, which focus neither on the day-to-day issues of Sicilian life nor on any search for the reasons behind difficulties inherent in Sicilian life. However, Sciascia's rejection of a representation of Sicily as constructed space may be a reaction against the anti-mafia trials unfolding in Sicily in the late

²⁴ *Ritratto, III*, p. 172; pp.183-84.

1980s.²⁵ Throughout the trials, an image of Sicily was constructed by the magistrates, northerners constructing Sicily as westerners constructed the Orient in Said's analysis.²⁶ Whilst Sciascia could permit himself to designate Sicily as 'luogo della non-ragione', he could not accept such a construction from outsiders. Thus in his final texts, Sciascia painstakingly asserts that Sicily is more than a construct, and is also a real place inhabited by real people.

The trajectory of the detective novels

This pattern of a depiction of real space, followed by a portrayal of conceptual space, leading onto a representation balanced between the two, is borne out by Sciascia's detective novels.²⁷ The first two detective novels, *Il giorno della civetta* (1961) and *A ciascuno il suo* (1966), recount the problems of enforcing law and order in a society permeated by the mafia.²⁸ The texts depict the difficulty of imposing law and order as a very Sicilian problem, evidenced by the fact that it is the northern detective Bellodi who seeks to implement justice on the island. Onofrio Lo Dico describes the clash between Bellodi and his adversary, the *mafioso* don Mariano as 'l'urto di due mondi, quello "isolano", atavico, "protetto" all'ombra della sua "santa chiesa", e quello "esterno", libero, con i suoi principi iscritti nel "Diritto"'.²⁹ Both texts are firmly rooted in Sicily, in their

²⁵ John Dickie outlines Sciascia's vehement and unexpected reaction to the mafia trials in *Cosa Nostra*, pp. 394-96. See also Lupo, *Storia della mafia*, pp. 294-95.

²⁶ Many of the anti-mafia magistrates were Sicilian, including Giuseppe Falcone and Paolo Borsellino. The trials however led to widespread media coverage, in which Sicily was constructed by outsiders.

²⁷ See appendix 1.

²⁸ *Il giorno della civetta* appears in *I*, pp. 387-483; *A ciascuno il suo* appears in *I*, pp. 775-887.

²⁹ Onofrio Lo Dico, *La fede nella scrittura: Leonardo Sciascia* (Caltanissetta-Rome: Salvatore Sciascia, 1990), pp. 198-99.

focus on women and 'la roba'.³⁰ The following three *gialli*, *Il contesto* (1971), *Todo modo* (1974) and *Il cavaliere e la morte* (1988) are set in un-named spaces, and demonstrate that the problems of the mafia and collusion between state and underground forces, are no longer confined to Sicily but have become generic in Italy and further afield.³¹ This is exemplified by *Il cavaliere e la morte*, which is set in an un-named northern Italian city, and is populated by characters who are known only by their titles, such as *Vice* and *Capo*. The anonymous place and characters do, as Anne Mullen suggests, allow Sciascia to show that collusion between police and organized crime transcends individual, local or national bounds.³² However, the final text in the cycle, *Una storia semplice* (1989) is once more set in Sicily (*III*, pp. 729-761). This is not the clearly Sicilian setting of *Il giorno della civetta* or *A ciascuno il suo*, but is instead a sparse landscape. Lo Dico suggests that the disintegrating landscape is symbolic of a decaying society.³³ The extent to which Sicily is portrayed as a real space is perhaps less important in this final *giallo* than the explicit return to Sicily as a site of collusion between police and the underworld and of a cover-up of police killings. In re-asserting Sicily, rather than an un-named space, as the site of this corruption and collusion, Sciascia is able to stress that Sicily is the home of the mafia. Conversely, this portrayal of Sicily as intrinsically linked to the mafia engages

³⁰ In *La Sicilia come metafora*, Sciascia designates the 'sciacciante e conservatrice' matriarchal system as a key problem in Sicily, along with the difficulties imposed by a focus on 'la roba'. Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, pp. 74 and 50.

³¹ *Il cavaliere e la morte* appears in *III*, pp. 403-65.

³² Anne Mullen, 'Leonardo Sciascia's Detective Fiction and Metaphors of Mafia', in *Crime Scenes: Detective Narratives in European Culture since 1945*, ed. by Anne Mullen and Emer O'Beirne (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 88-99 (pp. 92-93).

³³ Lo Dico, *La fede*, p. 215. Conversely Anne Mullen suggests that there are no Sicilian features to the landscape, demonstrating Sciascia's belief that Sicily and Italy were indistinguishable (Mullen, 'Leonardo Sciascia's Detective Fiction', p. 93).

with the anti-mafia movement, in the same way as his attempts to show that Sicily is more than the mafia, albeit from a different angle. John Dickie has suggested that Sciascia was unable to reconcile himself to the anti-mafia movement, as he believed that the 'sentire mafioso' was an intrinsic part of the Sicilian psyche (Dickie, *Cosa Nostra*, pp. 395-96). In returning to a Sicilian setting for his last detective novel, Sciascia stresses that the phenomenon of the mafia remained an intrinsic part of the Sicilian mindset, even though the 'linea della palma' (the mafia mentality), 'viene su, verso il nord'.³⁴ In doing so, Sciascia challenges the belief that the mafia may be eradicated from Sicily through the anti-mafia trials, which he believed to be a dangerous and unsuitable weapon to use against the mafia.³⁵ Sciascia uses his trajectory of spatial representations to engage with the mafia in its different phases. Early on, Sciascia is keen to assert the omnipresence of the mafia in Sicily, illustrating through his depiction of real space that the mafia was intrinsically woven into the social fabric of the island. Such engagement is especially important at a time when the very existence of the mafia was denied by Sicilians.³⁶ Sciascia's later texts draw on conceptual space to engage with the idea that the mafia was becoming an universal evil, before he eventually returns to a depiction of the mafia as embedded in Sicilian space, using spatial representation to assert his belief that the mafia, as part of the Sicilian psyche, could not be defeated.

³⁴ The metaphor is Bellodi's, at the end of *Il giorno della civetta* (I, p. 479).

³⁵ See chapter 1.2. of this thesis, 'Direct Comment on Contemporary Events', for a discussion of Sciascia's opposition to the anti-mafia trials, which he believed sacrificed important liberties and were political in nature.

³⁶ John Dickie's *Cosa Nostra* traces denials of the mafia's existence from its inception up until the maxi-trials of the 1980s.

The theatre of historical space

The existence of the mafia poses a significant threat to the possibility of imposing law and order in Sicily. Sciascia's historical fictions engage with a second element which undermines justice; the failure of the island to implement reform at key moments. Sciascia engages with the presence of injustice and the lack of reforms throughout his writing, although his representation of historical space as a means of engaging with these ideas undergoes the same trajectory as the spatial depiction in the texts already examined. Sciascia's first two historical stories, *Il quarantotto* (1958) and *Il Consiglio d'Egitto* (1963), represent a real historical moment, lived by idiosyncratic characters in a visual space.³⁷ *Il quarantotto* details a young boy's hopes and delusion when Garibaldi lands in Sicily and allies himself with the existing power bases (embodied by the Baron for whom the boy's family works). This historical moment (and lasting legacy) is grounded in a very visual historical space, populated by fascinating characters. The protagonist is a gardener's son, and describes the grounds in which he lives, giving a vivid image of the historical moment. The humorous relationship between the Baron and his wife gives a very human dimension to the political events following Garibaldi's landing in Sicily. Following the discovery of the Baron's infidelity with a servant girl, the Baroness will only address her husband through a third-person interpreter, even as their house is under siege. The Baron laments that 'in questa casa, rivoluzione o no, dobbiamo recitare la farsa', adding a moment of humanity to a symbolic event (*Il quarantotto*, I, p. 282).

³⁷ *Il quarantotto* appears in I, pp. 257-322; *Il Consiglio d'Egitto* appears in I, pp. 485-641.

Similarly, *Il Consiglio d'Egitto* grounds an important historical moment in a Sicily which emerges as a real space. Set in 1782, the text recounts the failure of Viceroy Caracciolo to import the ideals of the Enlightenment to Sicily and the arrest and torture of Di Blasi, a revolutionary who seeks to bring about a just new order. It is an important historical moment, not just for the protagonist Di Blasi, a revolutionary who espouses reason and Enlightenment ideals, but for the course of Sicilian history. Farrell argues that the total defeat of Di Blasi, who at the end of the text is both physically and mentally destroyed following prolonged torture, is symbolic of the total failure to introduce reason into the public affairs of Sicily.³⁸ Sciascia reiterates that Di Blasi's anguish and failure to bring about revolution will be repeated time and time again, because the changes he sought were not realized. Sciascia recounts:

la disperazione che avrebbe accompagnato le sue [Di Blasi's] ultime ore di vita se soltanto avesse avuto il presentimento che in quell'avvenire che vedeva luminoso popoli interi si sarebbe votati a torturarne altri; che uomini pieni di cultura e musica, esemplari nell'amore familiare e rispettosi degli animali, avrebbero distrutto milioni di altri esseri umani, con implacabile metodo, con efferata scienza della tortura; e che persino i più diretti eredi della ragione avrebbero riportato la *questione* nel mondo: e non più come elemento di diritto, quale almeno era nel momento in cui lui la subiva, ma addirittura come elemento dell'esistenza. (*Il Consiglio*, I, p. 636)

Yet even though Sciascia is using historical space as a theatre in which to play out the contemporary problem of corruption in Sicily, the text once more depicts a real historical moment. Details about food, the cosmic rarity of bathing and the

³⁸ Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 112. Ruth Glynn takes a less pessimistic view, suggesting that 'a certain optimism may be gleaned from the fact that the man who dies awakens in another the rationalist, humanitarian values and beliefs for which he has been prepared to lay down his life' (Glynn, *Contesting the Monument*, p. 69).

primacy of relationships with women ground the more metaphorical debates about the course of Sicilian history.³⁹

Such grounding is entirely absent in the historical space of *I pugnatori* (1976) (II, pp. 271-345). The text functions primarily as a vehicle for Sciascia to comment on the strategy of tension, and the historical moment does not matter in its own right, as it is a purely constructed, metaphorical space⁴⁰. Sciascia's text recounts a series of random stabbings carried out in Palermo in 1862 in a bid to engender fear and panic and so foster nostalgia for the previous Bourbon rule. The second part of the narrative focuses on how the evidence used to convict those who carried out the plan could not be used against those who masterminded it, even though 'gli indizii contro il principi Sant'Elia e Giardinelli erano maggiori e più imponenti che non quelli contro tutti gli altri imputati (*I pugnatori*, II, p. 320). The narrative unfolds in dark, invisible spaces; the stabbings take place at night, and subsequent investigations unfold in prison or in the courtroom, aside from a brief foray into the Prince's house, which also takes place at night, in the shadows. There is precious little characterization, and the *pugnatori* and their victims are merely listed, while we learn little about the chief investigator Giacosa. Although Antonio Motta sees all of Sciascia's

³⁹ The visits of a local prostitute are far more crucial for a young monk than any philosophical debate, whilst his superior debates the frequency of bathing. Di Blasi learns about a conspiracy to re-write history at a tryst with his (married) lover, and on his arrest for conspiracy thinks primarily of his mother. This nod towards the Sicilian matriarchy is accepted by the arresting officer, Di Blasi's mortal enemy, as in Sicily 'la mamma stabilisce comunione' between men (*Il Consiglio*, I, p. 537).

⁴⁰ The 'strategy of tension' refers to a right-wing conspiracy to use terrorism to create a climate of fear in which authoritarian government would appear acceptable. Key personnel in the armed forces, secret services and government were suspected of involvement in neo-fascist terrorism. See Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 333-35; Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871-1995* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 385 and Norman Kogan, *A Political History of Italy: The Post-War Years* (New York: Praeger, 1983), pp. 239-40.

characters as being flesh and blood individuals with a real sense of personality, there is little evidence of such characterization in *I pugnatori*.⁴¹ Against the blank backdrop of the historical scene, Sciascia is able to comment directly on the problems facing the Italy of the present. He uses the constructed space of the past as a means to criticise the strategy of tension, likening the government's position to the subversive antics of the principe Sant'Elia (*I pugnatori*, II, p. 280). Sciascia also uses the theatre of the past as a stage on which to attack police incompetence and corruption in 1970s Italy. Ostensibly discussing the police procedures in 1862, Sciascia writes that 'né si capisce (e cioè si capisce benissimo, poiché di peggio abbiamo visto in questi nostri anni) come i carabinieri possano ignorare, al 15 ottobre, quel che questura e magistrati sanno fin dal 3' (*I pugnatori*, II, p. 286). Faced with the strategy of tension, Sciascia feels compelled to focus on the issues of his time, rather than distract attention away from the present by too colourful an evocation of the past. Sciascia leaves the reader with no doubt that the historical moment is purely metaphorical. The urgency of the present requires Sciascia's (and of course the reader's) full attention, thus the historical space becomes purely conceptual.

Sciascia's final historical text, *Porte aperte* (1987), completes the spatial trajectory to depict a historical space poised between real and conceptual space (III, pp. 325-401). The text recounts the dilemma of *il piccolo giudice*, who, in the Sicily of 1937 must sentence a defendant who has confessed to a triple murder. Sciascia's account focuses on the ethical and moral dilemma faced by the

⁴¹ Antonio Motta, 'Il silenzio e la solitudine', in *Leonardo Sciascia: La memoria, il futuro*, ed. by Matteo Collura (Milan: Bompiani, 1998), pp. 73-74 (p. 73).

judge, who is expected, both by fascist law and by society at large, to pass a death sentence. Sciascia directly compares the attitude of the fascist law courts to the 1980s anti-mafia trials, noting that in 1937 as in 1987, courts are willing to change their ethics to suit the ruling class of the day.⁴² Yet although the comparison between past and present is so similar in *I pugnatori* and *Porte aperte*, the spaces in which the texts unfold are not. Whereas the events of *I pugnatori* unfurl against a plain backdrop, *Porte aperte* is firmly rooted in the historical moment, and in Sicily. The reader is taken on a tour of the countryside surrounding the courtroom, and is given privileged access to a juror's home, library and curious family background (*Porte aperte*, III, pp. 389-95). The juror, of peasant stock, inherited a vast library from an almost illiterate grandfather. In setting the historical text between real and metaphorical space, Sciascia focuses the reader's attention onto Sicily, and so once more onto the anti-mafia trials. His fascinating evocation of fascist Sicily re-evokes his former comparisons between the anti-mafia movement and fascism, using historical space to engage with a specifically Sicilian phenomenon (*Porte aperte*, III, p. 769). As in Sciascia's other texts, the anti-mafia trials facilitate a move away from conceptual space towards a grounding in the specific issue of the day.

Some conclusions about space

Sciascia's shifting uses of spatial representation facilitate engagement with a changing world. As Sciascia's focus on events changes, so too does the way in

⁴² *Porte aperte*, III, p. 340. For an account of the anti-mafia trials, see John Dickie, *Cosa Nostra*, pp. 383-403, and Paul Ginsborg, *L'Italia del tempo presente: Famiglia, società, Stato 1980-1996* (Einaudi: Turin, 1998), pp. 360-63.

which he represents geographical and historical spaces. Early texts in the 1950s and 1960s use real space to engage with the difficulties of Sicilian life, as represented by poverty, the mafia and disillusionment, all a legacy of the past.⁴³ Texts in the 1970s and early 1980s favour a conceptual representation of space, as Sciascia seeks a metanarrative with which to explain Sicily's ills, as he witnesses a sicilianization of the peninsular (and further afield). In addressing Sicily's failure to find justice, Sciascia abandons his exploration of the historical moment *per sé* in favour of using historical space to engage explicitly with the pressing and distressing reality of the strategy of tension. The anti-mafia movement, and Sciascia's inability to come to terms with the notion that the mafia may be eradicated, cause him to return to the depiction of Sicily as a real space, both geographically and historically. In doing so he re-appropriates the image of Sicily from the anti-mafia movement, calling the movement into question in the process. In the midst of this flux of spatial representation, Sciascia's determination to engage with contemporary society through the representation of geographical and historical space remains constant.

Dialogue with society or with historical trends?

In addition to changing the way in which he represents historical space, Sciascia also re-dimensions his historical fiction so that it closely resembles the new trend in historiography: microhistory. Microhistory evolved in the late 1970s and 1980s and developed through a series of monographs published by Einaudi, in particular through the *Quaderni storici* journal, which allowed young academics to publish

⁴³ See appendix 1.

their work.⁴⁴ In their 1979 essay 'Il nome e il come: scambio ineguale e mercato storiografico', Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni outlined a programme to move Italian scholarship away from the French *Annales* school to a new methodology more suited to Italy's polycentric history.⁴⁵ They argued that quantitative study over an extended period could obscure and distort facts and so elaborated a new form of history with two main characteristics: a focus on the lower classes and a focus on the individual, using the name as a thread through which to build up a picture of a period. By this they envisaged building up an image of the entire lives of individuals, from birth to death, by linking data from various archives. Thus instead of using parish registers only to find average birth rates, death rates and so forth, Ginzburg and Poni proposed using the name of an individual to navigate through land and property archives, farm accounts, police records, focussing on many archives for fewer people rather than looking at vast amounts of data in single archives. Microhistory often focuses on the stories of villages, the family, convents and forgotten individuals. Giovanni Levi also stresses the importance in microhistory of incorporating the procedures of research, documentary limitations and interpretative connotations into the narrative itself.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Historians who published in the *Quaderni storici* included Manfredo Tafuri, Raymond Rosenthal, Franco Ramella and Giovanni Levi. For further detail on the origins of microhistory, see the introduction to *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, ed. by Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, trans by. Eren Branch (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. vii-xxvii.

⁴⁵ Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni, 'Il nome e il come: scambio ineguale e mercato storiografico', *Quaderni storici*, 40, (1979), 181-190.

⁴⁶ Giovanni Levi, 'On Microhistory', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. by Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), pp. 97-119. The theory of microhistory is also explored in Carlo Ginzburg's essay 'Clues: Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes', in *The Sign of the Three: Dupin, Holmes, Pierce*, ed. by Umberto Eco and Thomas Sebeok (Bloomington: Indiana University

Sciascia's later historical novels fit this framework perfectly; indeed, his 1986 text *La strega e il capitano* seems almost written as a model of microhistory, as it details the life of Caterina, a servant girl burned as a witch in 1616 when her Master developed unexplained stomach pains (*III*, pp. 199-257). Firstly, Sciascia's text details the life of a lower class girl, a servant usually forgotten to history. Sciascia is aware of this absence and notes at the beginning of the text that the lives of Caterina and her associates, as members of the lower classes, would usually go unreported. Later on in the text, he stresses the way in which characters easily disappear from history, referring specifically to Caterinetta, another servant girl, who is sent to an asylum after her Master fell in love with her and believed himself bewitched (*La strega*, *III*, p. 214). Early on, Sciascia stresses the importance of learning about the lives of the lower classes, such as ballerinas, believing that this information would also be helpful in reconstructing the lives of the upper classes who visited them. Caterina in fact figures in the historical accounts of the period, but is barely named. Indeed, Sciascia cites how Pietro Verri notes in his *Annali* that 'molte principali persone vi fanno poco buona figura e la notizia della strega non interessa la Storia' (*La strega*, *III*, p. 205). Sciascia's text tells Caterina's story, proving that he believes the story of lost individuals is important in understanding the period.

As well as focusing on the lower classes, Ginzburg and Poni suggested that microhistory should use the name as a thread through which to trace

Press, 1988), pp. 81-118. Ginzburg's essay first appeared in *Crisi della ragione*, ed. by A. Garagni (Turin: Einaudi, 1979), pp. 59-106. Examples of microhistories include Carlo Ginzburg's *Il formaggio e i vermi: Il cosmo di un mugnaio del '500* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976) and Jonathon Spence's *The Death of Woman Wang* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).

individuals through various archives. In his discussion of the importance of knowing the history of ballerinas, Sciascia stresses the importance of names, repeating the word 'nomenclatura' (*La strega*, III, p. 205). Sciascia uses Caterina's name as a thread through parish records and the transcripts of her trial. Sciascia's treatment of these transcripts is particularly interesting. He looks not only at her testimony but also at the questions asked by the Inquisitors (to look for leading questions) and at the testimonies of the leading doctors and her supposed victims, looking for any possible motives behind them, analyzing the interpretative connotations of the narrative itself, as Levi highlights.⁴⁷

Sciascia's tale represents a good example of the way in which the focus on a particular individual can offer a wider vision of history. Caterina's own account of her life (before torture) offers a fascinating description of a servant's life, as she moved from post to post, often the mistress as well as maid of the Master (*La strega*, III, pp. 236-39). Her later testimonies, once she had undergone torture, offer insights into popular superstition and visions of witchcraft, as does her account of having 'negoziato' with the Devil at the 'barilotto' (*La strega*, III, pp. 251-52): she only learned of this practice through the Inquisitor yet reproduced it as an event in her own life (*La strega*, III, p. 247). The reconstruction of her life tells us what the Inquisitors wanted to hear. The microhistory illustrates the madness of show trials and the unreliability of confessions, as well as the cruelty of torture and the willingness to believe in evil.

⁴⁷ Ginzburg similarly interrogates the questions asked by Inquisitors throughout *Il formaggio e i vermi*.

Although *La strega* appears highly influenced by the trends of microhistory, it is important to assess whether Sciascia's earlier texts display similar characteristics, suggesting that this approach to history is innate in Sciascia's writing, as opposed to influenced by the new methodology. *Il Consiglio d'Egitto* (1963) offers an interesting case study, in its account of the forgery of a historical document by the monk Giuseppe Vella. Vella justifies his enterprise, as he believes that history offers in any case a limited view, as it recounts only the history of the powerful and the wealthy. Vella declares that 'il lavoro dello storico è tutto un imbroglio, un'impostatura: e che c'era più merito ad inventarla, la storia, che a trascriverla da vecchie carte, da antiche lapidi, da antichi sepolcri' (*Il Consiglio*, I, p. 533). History is the history of

i re, i vicerè, i papi, i capitani: i grandi, insomma....Facciamone un po' di fuoco, un po' di fumo, ad illudere i popoli, le nazioni, l'umanità vivente...La storia! E mio padre? E vostro padre? E il gorgoglio delle loro viscere vuote? E la voce della loro fame? Credete che si sentirà, nella storia?'. (*Il Consiglio*, I, p. 534)

This view of the limitations of history certainly seems to pre-empt the later discourses of microhistory. However Vella's view represents only one conception of history, and Ruth Glynn suggests that *Il Consiglio* represents a duel between Vella's view of history as forgery and the revolutionary aristocrat Di Blasi's view of history as truth, in which neither notion is accepted in its entirety by the end of the text.⁴⁸ Similarly, the text does not focus primarily on a historical moment as lived by a poor man, but examines the experience for both a poor man and an

⁴⁸ Glynn, *Contesting the Monument*, pp. 53-76. Massimo Onofri suggests that the text outlines 'il duplice e inverso movimento del Vella in direzione di Di Blasi, del Di Blasi verso il Vella, nel senso di una reciproca accettazione e legittimazione', in *Storia di Sciascia* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1994), p. 85.

aristocrat. Although Giancarlo Vigorelli views *Il Consiglio* as 'l'anti-Gattopardo', as it recounts Sicily's failed transition through the eyes of a man of reason (Di Blasi) and a poor man (Vella), crucially the aristocrat Di Blasi is as powerful as Lampedusa's characters.⁴⁹ Although Di Blasi espouses the Enlightenment ideals of the equality of men, he does belong to the powerful elite, and so Sciascia's text does not entirely pre-empt the trends of microhistory.

Thus *Il Consiglio* contains elements which are important to microhistory, but to a more limited extent than later texts. The same is true of *Morte dell'Inquisitore*, published a year later, which at first glance appears to espouse the concepts of microhistory, yet under closer examination reveals itself to be quite different (*I*, pp. 643-716). Sciascia's text recounts the story of another monk, Fra Diego, who kills an Inquisitor whilst in jail. This re-telling of history, concentrating on a victim, a powerless individual, appears to fit the criteria suggested by micro-historians. Yet Sciascia's account focuses little on Fra Diego himself, preferring to concentrate on the general practices of the Inquisition. Hence it is possible to discern a marked shift in Sciascia's historical representations, with a self-conscious focus on the trends of microhistory in Sciascia's later texts. Although Sciascia's earlier texts have been seen to anticipate microhistory, this view is true to only a limited extent.⁵⁰ Sciascia's later historical texts do very clearly dialogue with the new methodology.

⁴⁹ Giancarlo Vigorelli's 'L'anti-Gattopardo' originally appeared in *Tempo* on 23rd February 1963, and is reproduced in Collura, *La memoria, il futuro*, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁰ Claude Ambroise suggests that Sciascia's early texts anticipate microhistory in '14 domande a Leonardo Sciascia', in *I*, pp. xv-xxiii (p. xxi).

Although Sciascia's texts explicitly take on board the precepts of microhistory, an important caveat remains. Whereas microhistories focus on individuals from a more neutral standpoint (in so far as this is possible), using the individual stories to shed light on wider historical issues, Sciascia uses the experiences of individuals to illuminate wider moral issues. The sense of moral outrage palpable in Sciascia's account of the abuse of Caterina in *La strega* is entirely absent from Jonathon Spence's narrative, *The Death of Woman Wang*, even though Spence's protagonist is as much a victim as Caterina. The roles of the writer and of the historian remain quite different, even when the writer adopts the strategies of micro-history, and Sciascia stresses that 'tutto è legato per me, al problema della giustizia: in cui si involge quello della libertà, della dignità umana, del rispetto tra uomo e uomo' ('14 domande', *I*, p. xxi). Thus I would suggest that Sciascia's representation of history, and of historical space, is influenced both by his shifting notion of the extent to which Sicilian history is pertinent as an indicator in island affairs or as a wider gauge of world affairs, and also by the trends of microhistory. However, despite these shifts, his desire to engage with immediate contemporary issues and with wider moral questions remains constant.

2.3. Representations of Geographical and Border Spaces in Tabucchi's Texts

Tabucchi's engagement with contemporary concerns is played out through representations of national, regional and border spaces. These allow him to engage with issues of identity, the growth of racism and immigration. In this chapter I wish to examine the ways in which Tabucchi uses Portugal as an arena in which to play out issues of Italian national and regional identity and in which to explore wider forces which threaten to de-stabilize Europe. His depiction of regional spaces undergoes a radical shift in the mid 1990s, and I wish to analyse the ways in which this change, which is accompanied by a parallel shift in his portrayal of border spaces, dialogues with the rise of the *Lega Nord* and with the increasingly visible realities of immigration into Italy. Within the chapter I also wish to consider Tabucchi's representation of the importance of reading and writing history as a means of engaging with the present and influencing the future.

The importance of Portugal

Tabucchi's use of Portugal as an arena in which to play out Italian concerns has been generally overlooked, as the presence of Portuguese space and characters have been attributed to Tabucchi's love of the country and culture. Commentators have focused on Tabucchi's depiction of Portuguese food, or on the emergence of Tabucchi's own experiences of Portugal in his texts.¹

¹ Arnould De Liedekerke notes that the character Damasceno Monteiro in *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro* is named after a street where Tabucchi and his wife used to live, in his article 'Antonio Tabucchi le contrebandier', *Magazine Littéraire* (July-August 1997), 154-59 (p. 158). Louise Sheehan also traces the origins of character names and places in her article 'Tabucchi's Portugal', in *Cross-cultural Travel: Papers from the Royal Irish Academy Symposium on Literature and Travel*, ed. by Jane Conroy (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), pp.

Although a variety of characters from Portuguese literature and history emerge in Tabucchi's texts, critical attention has focused on the various manifestations of the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa.² With the exception of the analysis of Tabucchi's choice of Salazar's Portugal as a setting for *Sostiene Pereira*, Tabucchi's representation of Portugal has not been considered as metaphorical.³ Thus in her article dedicated to Tabucchi's representation of Portugal, Louise Sheehan determines that the 1991 text *Requiem*, written in Portuguese, is important as it marks a new level of Portuguese-ness, without considering the way in which the text refers to and reflects upon Italian identity.⁴

The area has perhaps been ignored as Tabucchi himself insists on the importance of Portugal to him on a personal level. His wife is Portuguese, and his working life has been split between teaching Portuguese literature at the Universities of Pisa and Siena, and working at the Italian embassy in Lisbon. Tabucchi refers to Portugal as a spiritual home, declaring that 'il Portogallo è il luogo dell'anima, il luogo dell'affetto, è una mia patria adottiva. Questa terra mi ha adottato e io l'ho adottata quasi trent'anni fa, accettandola come

285-295. The importance of Portuguese food is analysed by Michela Meschini in her article 'Un'allucinazione gastronomica: I banchetti impossibili e inquieti di Antonio Tabucchi', in *Soavi sapori della cultura italiana: Atti del XIII congresso dell'A.I.P.I Verona / Soave 27-29 agosto 1998*, ed. by Bart Van den Bossche, Michel Bastiaensen, Corinna Salvadori Lonergan (Florence: Franco Cesati, 2000), pp. 397-403. Gian Paolo Biasin also considers the importance of Portuguese food in the section dedicated to Tabucchi in *Le periferie della letteratura: Da Verga a Tabucchi* (Ravenna: Longo, 1997), pp. 131-46.

² I will focus on the portrayal of Pessoa in chapter 4.3. of this thesis, 'Dialogue with the Past and the Self in Tabucchi'. Many other characters from Portuguese literature and history make cameo appearances in Tabucchi's texts, such as the sixteenth century Indian Viceroy Alfonso de Albuquerque in *Notturmo indiano* (p. 76). *Notturmo indiano* was first published in 1984; all page references are to the 2000 Sellerio edition.

³ *Sostiene Pereira* was first published in 1994; all page references refer to the 1998 Feltrinelli edition.

⁴ Sheehan, 'Tabucchi's Portugal', p. 487. *Requiem* was translated by Sergio Vecchio; when Tabucchi tried to translate it himself, he found himself writing a different book, as he explains in P. Gaglianome and M. Cassini, *Conversazione con Antonio Tabucchi: Dove va il romanzo?* (Milan: Omicron, 1997), p. 26. The Italian translation of *Requiem* appeared in 1992. Page references refer to the 2001 text published by Feltrinelli.

l'altra parte di me'.⁵ Certainly, Tabucchi's texts display his fondness for the country, his '*portoghesità* affettiva' and for the beauty and light of Portugal (Gaglianome and Cassini, *Dove va il romanzo?*, p 26). In the same interview Tabucchi describes his fascination with Portuguese solarità, writing

amo il Portogallo proprio perché è un paese del sud, un paese di grande luce, di grande sole, di giornate lunghissime che finiscono alle dieci di sera: è un paese in cui provo un costante senso di benessere, perché la mia meteropatia mi porta a detestare le giornate di pioggia.... (Gaglianome and Cassini, *Dove va il romanzo?*, p. 33)

Tabucchi manifests this fascination in *Requiem* and *Sostiene Pereira*, both set in Lisbon. The opening page of *Requiem*, for instance, focuses on 'il sole di fine luglio', which 'dardeggiava' (*Requiem*, p. 13), whilst *Sostiene Pereira* opens with a description of 'una magnifica giornata d'estate, soleggiata e ventilata, e Lisbona sfavillava' (*Sostiene Pereira*, p. 7). Nonetheless, I would suggest that Tabucchi's depiction of Portugal does more than display his love for the country. Just as for Sciascia Sicily represents both a homeland and a theatre for exploring wider problems, so Portugal offers Tabucchi both another 'patria' and a stage upon which to explore Italian issues.

National identity

The issue of Italian national identity is explored in the 1991 text *Requiem* and in the 1994 text *Sostiene Pereira*, which bring into particular focus the question of Italy's place in an increasingly integrated Europe. On the one hand, Italy's famed *sorpasso* in 1987, overtaking Britain to become the fifth

⁵ Gaglianome and Cassini, *Dove va il romanzo?*, p. 25. Tabucchi makes a similar claim in an interview with Antonio Borsari, defining Portugal as 'primo di tutto [...] un'altra patria. Una patria sola mi sembra insufficiente'. Antonio Borsari, 'Cos'è una vita se non viene raccontata? Conversazione con Antonio Tabucchi', *Italienisch: Zeitschrift für Italienische Sprache und Literatur*, 13, no. 2, 26 (November 1991), pp. 2-23 (p. 7).

world economic power, seemed to place the peninsular in the front line of European powers.⁶ Similarly, in becoming a net importer of people in the early 1980s, Italy appeared as a rich, attractive nation, a magnet for those searching for a better life (Ginsborg, *Italy and Its Discontents*, p. 62). Yet this view was not shared by other European powers, and Ginsborg suggests that Italy was perceived as belonging to the poorer, less developed, southern part of Europe (Ginsborg, *Italy and Its Discontents*, pp. 104-109). For the northern European nations, Italy's primacy in Europe was vexed by unstable governments and by economic weakness. Such fears were not wholly unjustified, since in 1991 it became clear that without some rather creative accounting, Italy would not fulfil the three main requirements for monetary union.⁷ Portugal magnifies the problems faced by Italy; being situated on the geographical extremity of Europe, and struggling to meet the financial and the political requirements for closer integration. Beset by political instability in the wake of the 1974 revolution and by economic weakness, Portugal offers a vantage point from which to view the problems faced by Italy.⁸

Significantly, it is marginal characters in Tabucchi's texts who pair together Portugal and Italy as a bloc of 'gente del Sud', intrinsically opposed to the northern states of Europe. *Requiem* (1991) and *Sostiene Pereira* (1994) are both set in Lisbon, though at very different times. *Requiem*, set in the present, recounts the experiences of an unnamed protagonist as he wanders

⁶ See Paul Ginsborg, *Italy and Its Discontents: Family, Civil Society and State 1980-2000* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 6.

⁷ Paul Ginsborg, 'Explaining Italy's Crisis', in *The New Italian Republic: From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to Berlusconi*, ed. by Stephen Gundle and Stephen Parker (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 19-30 (pp. 21-22). Italy's public debt, budget deficit and inflation were all above the permitted thresholds. Overall, only Greece performed more poorly in the fiscal tests.

⁸ For an overview of Portuguese government, economy and identity, see *Portugal in the 1980s: Dilemmas of Democratic Consolidation*, ed. by K. Maxwell (London: Greenwood Press, 1986) and R.A.H. Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal: A History* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979).

around the city. He is awaiting a midnight rendezvous with his dinner guest, and in the meantime, meets a variety of characters, both living and dead. His guest, although never explicitly named, is understood to be the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, as suggested by a series of clues offered throughout the text.⁹ In *Requiem*, a lame lottery-ticket seller dismisses the notion that the protagonist could be troubled by his Unconscious, as

l'Inconscio è roba della borghesia viennese d'inizio secolo, qui siamo in Portogallo e il signore è italiano, noi siamo roba del Sud, la civiltà greco-romana, non abbiamo niente a che fare con la Mitteleuropa, scusi sa, *noi* abbiamo l'anima. (*Requiem*, p. 18)

The lame lottery-ticket seller thus suggests that Italy and Portugal form a united bloc which is intrinsically opposed to the north, and that the two parts of Europe are fundamentally irreconcilable. Crucially, however, this view is not unproblematically accepted, and there is a clear sense of Tabucchi playing with this notion of essential difference. The protagonist refutes the notion that he has no Unconscious because he is a southerner, affirming that 'io l'anima ce l'ho, di sicuro, ma ho anche l'Inconscio, voglio dire ormai l'Inconscio io ce l'ho, l'Inconscio uno se lo prende, è come una malattia, mi sono preso il virus dell'Inconscio, càpita'.¹⁰ On one level this undermines the notion of the Freudian Unconscious, nominating it as a 'malattia', yet the claim also problematizes the notion of a European divide.¹¹

⁹ These include the nomination of the guest as 'il più grande poeta del ventesimo secolo' on the opening page of the text (p. 13); the observation that Pessoa adorns the hundred escudo note (p. 15); and the appearance of Lo Zoppo della Lotteria, a character from Pessoa's *Book of Disquiet* (p. 17), a text which Tabucchi has translated into Italian. Fernando Pessoa, *Il libro dell'Inquietudine di Bernardo Soares*, trans. by Maria José de Lancastre and Antonio Tabucchi, preface by Antonio Tabucchi (Feltrinelli: Milan, 2004).

¹⁰ *Requiem*, p. 18. I am following Tabucchi's convention of capitalizing 'Unconscious'.

¹¹ Tabucchi's often problematic dialogue with Freud is analysed in chapter 4.3. of this thesis; 'Dialogue with the Past and the Self in Tabucchi's Texts'. Tabucchi's presentation of Freud in *Requiem* is discussed in: Anna Botta, 'Antonio Tabucchi's *Requiem*: Mourning Modernism', *Spunti e ricerche*, 12 (1996/1997), 143-57; Paul Diffley, 'The Figure of the Detective in the

The concept of an essentially divided Europe is also refuted in Tabucchi's 1994 text *Sostiene Pereira*. The novel recounts the experience of the journalist Pereira in Salazar's Portugal in 1938, as the protagonist evolves from being an anxious, overweight man, fixated on death and the past, believing that writing and politics are unconnected, into a fitter man, looking to the future and brave enough to write an incendiary article denouncing the murder of a young revolutionary, Monteiro Rossi, by the political police. As in *Requiem*, a marginal character's assertion that Europe is fundamentally divided is rejected by the protagonist. The character Silva, an academic who makes a brief appearance when Pereira visits Coimbra, suggests that public opinion, free speech and trade unions have no place in Portugal. Silva asserts that these are 'un trucco che hanno inventato gli anglosassoni, [...] noi non abbiamo mai avuto il loro sistema politico, non abbiamo le loro tradizioni, [...] noi siamo gente del Sud, Pereira, e ubbidiamo a chi grida di più, a chi comanda' (*Sostiene Pereira*, p. 64). Pereira, like the protagonist of *Requiem*, cannot accept the notion of such a Manichean divide. Tabucchi's texts dialogue with the debates of European integration, voicing and crucially undermining, stereotypical views.

In *Sostiene Pereira*, and indeed in the later *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro*, a more subtle divide also emerges, which ostensibly designates Portugal and France as binary opposites, as sites of repression and freedom respectively.¹² Pereira's Portugal is a site of growing violence and censorship. Early on in the text, a socialist from the Alentejo region is killed

novels of Antonio Tabucchi', in *Crime Scenes: Detective Narratives in European Culture since 1945*, ed. by Anne Mullen and Emer o'Beirne (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 100-112.

¹² *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro* was first published in 1997. Page references are to the 2002 Feltrinelli edition.

by police and a local Jewish shop is vandalised. Pereira's newspaper articles must pass through the censors, and he is watched by the caretaker, a police informer. As Portugal becomes increasingly repressive, Pereira finds freedom in ideas; ideas of French origin. He is inspired by French literature, by the writings of Maupassant, Balzac, Daudet and Mauriac. He is also inspired by the theories of two French psychologists, Ribot and Janet. They argue that the personality is structured as a set of competing egos, which are under the hegemony of one ruling ego (*Sostiene Pereira*, p. 123). As this hegemonic ego may change, Pereira finds a new belief in his ability to change and to leave his past behind. After Pereira writes an article denouncing the brutal murder of a young revolutionary, Monteiro Rossi, by the political police, he must flee Portugal. Pereira chooses a new passport from the collection that Monteiro Rossi had brought with him, tellingly selecting a French passport and escaping to Saint Malo.¹³

A good deal of critical attention, not least at the time of publication, has focused on Tabucchi's choice of Salazar's Portugal as a setting for his text.¹⁴ The depiction of a repressive and fascist state has been seen primarily as a commentary on Berlusconi's rise to power. Written months before the media giant formed a government comprising the neo-fascist *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN) and the *Lega Nord*, the texts was seen as a warning of the perils of censorship and fascism. There are many interesting parallels between the rise of Salazar and the rise of Berlusconi, however Tabucchi insists that he

¹³ France represents freedom not only for Pereira, but also for the psychologist Cardoso, who introduces Pereira to the theories of Ribot and Janet, and who tells Pereira of his plans to flee Portugal for France mid-way through the text.

¹⁴ Flavia Brizio-Skov's analysis of the contemporary reviews of *Sostiene Pereira* shows that the reception of the text was positive, with the exception of Luca Doninelli's review 'Macché letteratura? È propaganda', *Il Tempo*, March 9th, 1994. Flavia Brizio-Skov, *Antonio Tabucchi: Navigazioni in un arcipelago narrativo* (Cosenza: Pellegrini, 2002), pp. 127-28.

completed the text 'nell'estate del '93, quando non potevo ancora prevedere quanto sarebbe accaduto'.¹⁵ Jennifer Burns has also pointed out that Portugal's position in 1938, next to a country where civil war had already erupted, may be intended to reflect Italy's position alongside Yugoslavia in the 1990s.¹⁶ Tabucchi himself insists that the text does not comment on any one specific issue, but rather represents a reaction to growing trends across Europe as a whole. He explains that:

nel momento in cui maturavo il racconto di Pereira mi è sembrato di cogliere delle sgradevoli analogie fra gli anni che stiamo vivendo e gli anni Trenta. Le ho colte in certi venti che soffiano di nuovo sull'Europa: un ritorno dei nazionalismi più feroci come nell'ex-Jugoslavia, nelle minoranze che ricorrono al terrorismo, la xenofobia dilagante nel nostro continente. È ritornata la paura dell'altro, una ventata di razzismo ha investito l'Europa, la Germania, l'Italia. È ciò che mi ha fatto pensare a una somiglianza con gli anni Trenta. (Parazzoli, *Il gioco del mondo*, p. 77)

Tabucchi's choice of Salazar's Portugal can therefore be seen as a representation of all that is wrong in Europe, of the danger of entering another dark phase of repression and fascisms in their new forms.

If, to adopt Voltaire's terminology, Salazar's Portugal represents the worst of all possible (European) worlds, then perhaps France is meant to represent the best of all possible worlds.¹⁷ It is clear that the France which is portrayed in *Sostiene Pereira* is not a geographical site but a conceptual

¹⁵ *Il gioco del mondo: Dialoghi sulla vita, i sogni, le memorie con Lalla Romano, Vincenzo Consolo, Luciano de Crescenzo, Giuseppe Pontiggia, Susanna Tamaro, Antonio Tabucchi, Lara Cardella, Gina Lagorio, Alberto Bevilacqua, Luce D'Eramo*, ed. by F. Parazzoli (Milan: Edizioni San Paolo, 1998), p. 79. Salazar gained prominence by promising to use his proven financial expertise to revive a flagging economy (Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal*, pp. 32-82). Patrick McCarthy defines Berlusconi's focus on the economy and his private success as the key elements in his electoral success, in 'Forza Italia: The New Politics and Old Values of a Changing Italy', in Gundle and Parker, *The New Italian Republic*, pp. 130-46.

¹⁶ Jennifer Burns, *Fragments of Impegno: Interpretations of Commitment in Contemporary Italian Narrative 1980-2000* (Leeds: Northern Universities Press, 2001), p. 71. Burns also stresses that the choice of Salazar's Portugal reaffirms the need to remember and to take responsibility for the past.

¹⁷ Voltaire, *Candide* (Paris: Larousse, 1998)

embodiment of Enlightenment ideals. Sciascia's nomination of Paris as 'una città libro, una città scritta, una città stampata' holds true not only as a description of his own texts but also for those of Tabucchi.¹⁸ For both writers, France emerges as a textual space, a space of freedom of thought and justice. This image of France is not particular to *Sostiene Pereira*, but also emerges in *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro* (1997). Although *La testa* is set in contemporary Portugal, the texts are strikingly similar, as *La testa* recounts another discovery of Portuguese police brutality by a journalist. The young journalist Firmino is sent from Lisbon to Oporto to investigate the identity of a headless corpse, discovered in woods near a gypsy encampment at the edge of the city. He eventually discovers that a police sergeant, Titânio Silva, was trafficking heroin from Hong Kong to Portugal under the cover of an import-export company, before selling the drug through his nightclub. The corpse belonged to Monteiro Rossi, a warehouseman for the company, who attempted to intercept the shipment to sell for his own profit, but was caught by the sergeant and subsequently tortured, killed and decapitated. The abuse of justice is not confined to the police, as the judiciary subsequently acquit the sergeant. Against the backdrop of such violence and repression, Firmino is offered a scholarship to study censorship in France. As in the case of *Pereira*, France offers a space of reflection and thought away from the brutal realities of daily life in Portugal. Firmino's previous research project linked Italy and Portugal, since he investigated the influence of Vittorini on the Portuguese post-war novel. Hence his new project can be read as a refusal of the

¹⁸ Leonardo Sciascia, *Cruciverba*, II, p. 1274. Sciascia's representation of Paris is discussed in chapter 2.2. of this thesis, 'Representations of Geographical and Historical Spaces in Sciascia's Texts'.

mentalities of the south, in favour of embracing a northern (specifically French) perspective.

La testa was inspired by a real case of brutality in Lisbon.¹⁹ The depiction of France, on the other hand, owes less to a picture of contemporary Paris than to an ideal. It would, I think, be disingenuous to suggest that Tabucchi idealizes France as a contemporary reality, and that he accepts the notions suggested by characters such as Silva and the lottery-ticker seller that Europe is divided between north and south. In his depiction of European space in his texts, Tabucchi firstly unpacks and dismisses the idea of a division of north and south, and then replaces it with the notion of the worst of all possible worlds and the best of all possible worlds. In *Sostiene Pereira*, this worst of all possible worlds is still a hypothetical case, a warning to the reader of the possible return of brutalities and fascisms. In *La testa*, this anti-Panglossian universe has become a reality, yet is still countered by the ideal of France. The presence of the French ideal in Tabucchi's texts does add, I would suggest, a note of optimism, a reminder that Europe is capable of designing, and hopefully realizing, a society built on justice, equality and reason.

Historical space

I have considered *Sostiene Pereira* as a text which engages with contemporary affairs through the representation of geographical space. Given that the text is set in 1938, the choice not to include it under the mantle of historical space requires some justification. I have set it apart from Tabucchi's other two

¹⁹ In an end 'nota' to *La testa*, Tabucchi outlines that the text was based on the murder of Carlos Rosa at a Lisbon police station in 1996 (*La testa*, p. 239). The case is examined in detail in chapter 1.2. of this thesis, 'Direct Comment on Contemporary Events'.

historical novels, *Piazza d'Italia* (1975) and *Il piccolo naviglio* (1978), as, although *Pereira* engages with the need to recognize responsibility for history and to learn lessons from it, the text does not address the notion of writing history *per sé*. Reading history constitutes a key element in *Sostiene Pereira*, as the text, in its depiction of the fascisms of the past, urges caution in the present; yet the text does not address the power dynamics of writing history.²⁰

Tabucchi's two historical novels appeared at the beginning of his writing career. *Piazza d'Italia* was written in 1973 and published two years later, whilst *Il piccolo naviglio* was written in 1975 and published in 1978. Tabucchi chose to re-publish a slightly revised version of *Piazza d'Italia* in 1993, stating that after twenty years 'mi sembra giusto ripubblicarlo, anche perché è introvabile da tempo'.²¹ Equally 'introvabile' was *Il piccolo naviglio*, although Tabucchi's response in this case was very different. In the 'Lettre à Christian Bourgois', which serves as a preface to the French translation of the book, which appeared in 1999, Tabucchi explains that although he did not want to republish the text in his own language, he accepted that a translation could give the text new meaning and significance:

peut-être que je ne l'ai plus publiée dans ma langue parce que je n'avais ni la volonté ni la patience de prendre les ciseaux d'un jardinière qui s'efforce de rendre plus "domestique" une plante un peu sauvage du jardin. Et, bien que je trouve un peu excessif de ta part ton appréciation pour cette plante spontanément baroque, je n'exclus pas que sa transplantation dans un autre terreau linguistique puisse la rendre plus sobre et plus rangée.²²

²⁰ The importance of any act of writing is of course stressed in the text, as will be shown in chapter 4.3. of this thesis, 'Dialogue with the Past and the Self in Tabucchi'.

²¹ Antonio Tabucchi, *Piazza d'Italia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1998), p. 7. This text is a reprint of the 1993 edition.

²² Antonio Tabucchi, *Le petit navire: roman*, trans. by Lise Chapuis (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1999), pp. 5-6.

As the 1993 re-publication of *Piazza d'Italia* and the French translation of *Il piccolo naviglio* each represent in their own way second editions of the texts, I will refer to these later editions.

Flavia Brizio-Skov's chapters on *Piazza d'Italia* and *Il piccolo naviglio* are tellingly entitled 'Storia e microStoria in *Piazza d'Italia*' and 'Storia e metaStoria: "sovversione" ne *Il piccolo naviglio*'.²³ She argues that both texts constitute examples of microhistory as they fulfil the aim of microhistory, which she defines as recreating an atmosphere, a mentality and a culture from the remains of history (Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, p. 29). Brizio-Skov proffers an interesting theory, namely that the general distinction drawn between a historian who bases his stories in real events and a writer who does not, is problematized by micro-history, which seeks to recreate an atmosphere and a mentality (Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, pp. 31-32). This traditional dichotomy may not serve to distinguish between writer and micro-historian, but does offer a useful way of differentiating between Sciascia, whose historical fictions draw on individuals from history, and Tabucchi, whose historical novels create fictional characters, emblematic of the characters unknown to or forgotten by history.

Like Sciascia, Tabucchi recounts history from a de-centred perspective, and his texts narrate the effects of history on three generations of marginalized characters, who emerge as victims, as anti-heroes. In *Piazza d'Italia*, Plinio joins Garibaldi's expedition, loses a foot, and later dies when he is shot by a gamekeeper. His son Garibaldo is also shot by a representative of law and order, when he seeks to open the municipal granary to feed

²³ Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, pp. 29-55; 57-80.

starving villagers. The next Garibaldo (Plinio's grandson) is shot when making a speech against injustice in society in postwar Italy, following his years in the Resistance. All three characters fight to combat poverty and injustice, but changes produced are only ever cosmetic. The statue in the village square changes to represent the new King of Italy, then to portray Mussolini and finally to represent Democracy, but as Brizio-Skov observes, it remains 'un'immagine vuota' of change, since poverty and injustice remain constant (Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, p. 47).

Il piccolo naviglio equally portrays the effect of history on marginalised characters, although it is less pessimistic in its conclusion. The text primarily narrates the experiences of three generations of men named Sesto from 1850 to the 1970s. The first Sesto becomes a priest, then becomes disillusioned with religion and discovers a penchant for water, and so disappears, presumably to become a sailor. The second Sesto (his nephew) is imprisoned as an anti-fascist, and subsequently joins the partisans on his release. Betrayed by a former playmate, he is captured by Nazi troops at a childhood haunt and deported to Auschwitz, from whence he does not return. His son (the third Sesto, who re-styles himself Capitano Sesto), becomes involved in the 1968 movement and is arrested for distributing leaflets which denounce the police for shooting his girlfriend Rosa. Sesto's actions in the courtroom, where he accuses the judge of being a gorilla, leads to his seclusion in an asylum. On his release, Captain Sesto seeks the history of his ancestors, and finds it has not been written. Paolo Fonzio, who compiled the local chronicles, 'trop occupé à enregistrer les événements importants de ces années lointaines, passait sous silence les nomes incertains des gens obscurs et

oubliés' (*Le petit navire*, p. 234). The chronicle narrates the major events of the time, but not the effect that they had on the local people.

The chronicle ends with the life of Paolo Fonzio, and Brizio-Skov suggests that Capitano Sesto takes on the task of completing his work, however with an emphasis on the reasons behind events and their effect on local people, rather than on the facts in their essence (Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, pp. 69-71). This is perhaps slightly misleading, as whilst it is true that the focus of Capitano Sesto's narrative is different from that of Fonzio, rather than completing Fonzio's work I would suggest it offers a counter-narrative, a counter-history. Capitano Sesto goes back to his ancestors' stories, which are contemporaneous with Fonzio's narrative, recounting events which occurred during Fonzio's lifetime, as well as after his demise. The difference between the accounts lies in the way in which Fonzio 'faisait de l'Histoire, et non des histoires comme celle de Capitano Sesto' (*Le petit navire*, p. 63). The histories which Capitano Sesto will write will constitute the text which the reader has just read; an account of the personal triumphs and tragedies in the lives of marginal characters which may be occasioned by History but which are omitted from its narrative. Thus Capitano Sesto's act of writing histories, of reclaiming narrative and textual space, is an intensely powerful act. It is as much an attempt to secure a just society as the acts of Plinio and the two characters named Garibaldo in *Piazza d'Italia*. His enterprise will in fact be more successful than the blighted attempts of the characters in *Piazza d'Italia*, as it may have an influence on the future to come. Brizio-Skov's conclusion that Tabucchi's historical novel 'ci narra una storia di perdenti' is perhaps overly pessimistic, as Capitano

Sesto is able to make a strong political intervention by writing an account of the marginalised characters of history (Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, p. 47). The continuity between *Il piccolo naviglio* and *Sostiene Pereira*, where the acts of reading and writing history are imbued with the power to change the future, makes Tabucchi's renunciation of his second novel all the more curious. It would be wrong to suggest that Tabucchi rejects the narrative of History, as *Sostiene Pereira* underlines in its recollection of the global themes of the 1930s.²⁴ However Tabucchi does not discount the validity of histories, of the power involved in the telling of individual stories.

Regional space

Tabucchi's quest to give a voice to the marginalised characters of History remains a constant feature of his work, from *Piazza d'Italia* to his 2001 collection *Si sta facendo sempre più tardi*.²⁵ His representation of regional spaces on the other hand undergoes a significant shift in his work; a change I would suggest dialogues with the changing socio-political climate. Tabucchi's changing depiction of regionality is played out in Portuguese space, yet has strong resonances for contemporary Italy.

Tabucchi's earlier texts exalt regionality and local diversity, and this is often effectuated through copious descriptions of local dishes and specialities. *Requiem* demonstrates the delight that Tabucchi takes in local sub-cultures, and his use of food to embody regionality. The protagonist feasts on *sarrabulho*, a specialty of Douro, and despite his initial trepidation of eating a

²⁴ Brizio-Skov notes that Tabucchi never actually explains historical events in his first two novels, but rather alludes to them opaquely, expecting the reader to be aware of History (Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, pp. 40-41).

²⁵ *Si sta facendo sempre più tardi: Romanzo in forma di lettere* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2001).

mixture of pork, lard, tripe and blood, enjoys this regional dish (*Requiem*, pp. 43-44). Although the text is set in Lisbon, many of the characters that the protagonist meets are from the Alentejo region, and they all extol the virtues of their locality. The young girl Viriata praises the Christmas festivals and delicacies of her region, and laments the gradual erosion of local specialities with the advent of more international influences, as the traditional grilled sole faces a challenge from the Brazilian-influenced sole with banana (*Requiem*, pp. 57-58). Michela Meschini suggests that in *Requiem*, food represents a loss of identity in a postmodern, globalized world, as international food begins to encroach on more traditional fayre (Meschini, 'Un'allucinazione gastronomica', p. 399). However I would suggest that Tabucchi's celebration of local food and culture bolsters regional identity. This emerges in his glowing representation not only of food, but also of the Casa do Alentejo in Lisbon, a restaurant specializing in Alentejani food which also functions as a showcase for Alentejani culture, holding exhibitions of local art and music. The Casa do Alentejo plays a central role in *Requiem*, providing the setting for an enjoyable afternoon for the protagonist and, importantly, the site of his meeting with Isabel, a ghost from his past, who helps him to relieve traumas of the past.²⁶ Tabucchi's celebration of regional cuisine and local culture, even as he recognizes the threats posed by international influences, seeks to strengthen regional identity.

Such a delight in the diversity offered by regional cultures is conspicuous by its absence in Tabucchi's later texts. Regional identity

²⁶ The role of ghosts as analyst and analysand is explored in my article 'Absent and Real Bodies in Tabucchi: From Dissatisfaction to Resolution', in *In Corpore: Bodies in Post-Unification Italy*, ed. by Loredana Polezzi and Charlotte Ross (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, forthcoming).

becomes a fraught issue, characterized by mistrust and polarization, as Tabucchi outlines and, importantly, problematizes, regional stereotypes in a Portuguese framework. In *La testa*, Firmino is sent from Lisbon to Oporto to cover the story of the headless corpse, as the editor believes that the local correspondent cannot possibly be capable of competently reporting such 'roba grossa' (*La testa*, p. 26). At this point, rather than being portrayed as a delightful regional characteristic, food is used as a means to belittle and to despise a local culture. Before going to Oporto, Firmino holds Portugal's second city in little esteem, viewing its inhabitants as tripe-eating yokels (the speciality of Oporto is tripe). Regional mistrust is mutual, and the residents of Oporto do not view Lisbon as a modern city the country may be proud of, as it prepares for Expo 98.²⁷ Rather, the inhabitants of Oporto view Lisbon as a viper's nest of cheats and thieves. Firmino is proudly informed that 'noi di Oporto non truffiamo nessuno [...], mica siamo a Lisboa, sa' (*La testa*, p. 33). As Firmino spends time in Oporto and discovers that he is not condemned to a diet of tripe, he comes to realize that his preconceptions about Porto were unfounded, and that the city, if not more beautiful than Lisbon, is different, 'con un suo fascino che stava scoprendo' (*La testa*, p. 53). Eventually, 'Firmino sentì un'ondata di simpatia per quella città per la quale aveva provato, senza conoscerla, una certa diffidenza. Concluse che tutti siamo preda dei pregiudizi' (*La testa*, p. 83). This notion of prejudice is crucial here, and Firmino's shift in perspective, based on direct experience, is juxtaposed sharply with the intransigent views of his colleagues in Lisbon; views based on ignorance. Tabucchi's later text details the existence of regional prejudice,

²⁷ The reader is introduced to Lisbon as Firmino attempts to negotiate the traffic chaos occasioned by the Expo 98 construction projects (*La testa*, p. 21).

but unpacks it and shows it to be unfounded, based on mistrust and ignorance rather than truth.

I would suggest that Tabucchi's shift from representing regionality as a source of diversity and celebration to a series of problematic and damaging pre-conceptions, although centred in Portuguese space, dialogues with the growth of the *Lega Nord* in Italy, and, indeed, with the growth of racist discourse. Although the *Leghe* movement began in 1979 with a folklorist group seeking to preserve local culture and traditions in the Veneto region, by the late 1980s more *Leghe* had been founded and they had evolved into populist political bodies: protest movements for small businessmen, skilled workers and the urban self-employed. They were hostile to taxes, immigration and above all, to what they perceived as the corrupt Rome-based state, as encapsulated in the slogan 'Roma ladrona la Lega non perdona'.²⁸ Under the leadership of Umberto Bossi the various *Leghe* combined into one *Lega Nord* in 1990 and began to gain real political strength.²⁹ In 1994, the *Lega Nord* joined Berlusconi's *Polo della libertà* and toned down their racist rhetoric as they joined forces with the prominently southern based *AN*. However after the coalition fell, some months later, the *Lega Nord* reiterated their racist agenda, contrasting the 'typical' Lombard characteristics with the dissipation of Rome and the south. Thus it is after 1994, in the years preceding *La testa*, that the vision of the *Lega* came to the fore.³⁰ In 1997, when *La testa* was published,

²⁸ A *Lega Nord* slogan, first used in 1989.

²⁹ For the rise of the *Lega Nord*, see Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871-1995* (London: Longman, 1996) pp. 412-13.

³⁰ Ilvo Diamanti identifies four phases in the definition of the 'territory' that the *Lega Nord* claimed to be defending. The first was a source of historical and cultural identity; the second, a focus of interests (the hardworking north); thirdly, the peripheral parts of Italy (also encompassing the south and the islands) opposed to centralization; finally a return to a focus on the hardworking north opposed to the south and centralized state. Ilvo Diamanti, 'The

the *Lega Nord*'s calls for regional autonomy and Bossi's denunciations of a weak and parasitic South were in full flow. Indeed, Matt Frei observes that the *Lega* is peculiar as a nationalist party, as they consider internal migration and tensions to be as threatening as immigration.³¹ The discourses and policies were aimed chiefly at those whose knowledge of the South was based on ignorance and prejudice, on popular myth rather than real experience. Thus in contrasting the received opinions of those with no direct experience of Oporto with Firmino's informed opinion of the city, Tabucchi is dialoguing with the vitriolic discourses of the *Lega Nord*.

Border spaces

The shift in Tabucchi's representation of regional spaces is accompanied by a parallel shift in his depiction of border spaces and of the underworld. These two spaces are intrinsically linked in Tabucchi's texts, as marginalized characters from the underworld often inhabit border spaces. Border spaces in Tabucchi's early texts are privileged sites of encounter and of communication. This is true for both physical spaces such as ports and stations and also for more metaphysical sites such as cemeteries. These spaces epitomize the possibilities inherent in postmodernist discourse. Brian McHale suggests that the postmodern condition inhabits 'an anarchic landscape of worlds in the plural', and Tabucchi's early depiction of border sites privileges communication between these worlds.³²

Northern League: From Regional Party to Party of Government', in Gundle and Parker, *The New Italian Republic*, pp. 113-29.

³¹ Matt Frei, *Italy: Unfinished Revolution* (London: Mandarin, 1996), p. 184.

³² Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 37.

The possibilities inherent in border spaces emerge in Tabucchi's 'quest texts': *Notturmo indiano* (1984); *Il filo dell'orizzonte* (1986); *Requiem* (1991).³³ The protagonist of each text is searching for a truth, and experiences in border spaces do indeed advance them towards the discovery of a truth, which may not necessarily be the truth for which the quest began. In *Notturmo indiano*, the protagonist Roux travels across India in search of his missing friend Xavier. As his journey progresses, it emerges that Roux is really searching for himself.³⁴ A crucial moment of understanding occurs as Roux journeys from Madras to Goa by bus. In the middle of the journey, in the middle of the night, the bus makes a prolonged stop to await a connecting service.³⁵ Suspended between two days and between two destinations, Roux meets a young Indian boy and his deformed brother, who is a Jain prophet. This young prophet informs Roux that his soul is drifting, that 'tu sei un altro' (*Notturmo indiano*, p. 68). As the text draws to a close, Roux (and the reader) realizes that the boy was right. The encounter in a border space furthers Roux's quest, moving him towards a different answer to the one he was initially seeking, but towards an answer nonetheless.

The search for another also results in a search for the self in *Il filo dell'orizzonte*, published two years later. In *Il filo*, the mortuary assistant Spino seeks the identity of the aptly named Carlo Nobodi, a young man killed

³³ Page references to *Il filo dell'orizzonte* are to the 2002 Feltrinelli edition.

³⁴ Flavia Brizio-Skov explores the various possibilities suggested at the *dénouement* of the text, ranging from the notion that the protagonist is Roux searching for Xavier, to the idea that the protagonist is Xavier searching for Roux, and including the idea that the protagonist is searching for himself (Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, pp. 92-98).

³⁵ This encounter is pivotal to Inge Lanslots' interesting suggestion that the most significant moments in Tabucchi's novels occur in waiting rooms. Inge Lanslots, 'Tabucchi's Waiting Rooms', *Spunti e ricerche*, 12 (1996/1997), 51-60.

in a police raid.³⁶ Spino uncovers a series of clues which lead him both to discover the young man's past and to better understand himself. His quest takes him to visit a priest, a tailor, an ageing accountant in an import-export company, a schoolmistress and a pianist in a dockside bar. He visits a curious old shop, and the information gleaned there sends him to his ultimate two encounters, in a cemetery and at the docks. In the cemetery, Spino reads the inscription 'muore il corpo dell'uom, virtù non muore', which he understands to mean that he can renounce his search for the young man, that he has now given him a metaphorical burial.³⁷ In the final episode, Spino descends to the docks for a midnight encounter. Although no-one emerges, Spino learns that all he has been searching for has been in vain, as 'il filo dell'orizzonte è un luogo geometrico, perché si sposta mentre ci spostiamo noi' (*Il filo*, p. 107). Spino's search has been to understand his own identity and to understand his own truths, and indeed early on in the text, Spino's girlfriend Sara notes the physical similarity between Spino and Carlo Nobodi (*Il filo*, p. 32). Spino's moments of understanding occur in border spaces: at an import-export company; at the docks; at a cemetery; and ultimately at a port.

Like Spino and Roux, the protagonist of *Requiem* learns a lot about himself during his quest. He spends a day in a sun-drenched Lisbon, awaiting a meeting with his dinner guest, the ghost of Pessoa, and in the meantime meets figures from his past who help him to resolve issues which continue to

³⁶ Tabucchi identifies Spino as based primarily on himself, in *Autobiografie altrui: poetiche a posteriori* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2003), p. 11.

³⁷ Charles Klopp notes that the inscription is a fragment from Euripides, which in a more complete form reads 'Virtue's not killed at death. The body dies / But virtue lives; while all that bad men had / Dies with them, and is clean gone underground', and Klopp suggests that this permits Spino to give Carlo Nobodi a metaphorical burial. Klopp, 'Aporias and Intertextuality in Antonio Tabucchi's *Il filo dell'orizzonte*', *Italica*, 75, 3 (1998), 428-40 (pp. 433-34).

traumatise him. These meetings occur in border spaces which sit precariously between the worlds of the living and of the dead, of dream and of sleep, and between the text and the reader's imagination in an empty 'intercapitular' space.³⁸ The protagonist meets a character from his past, Tadeus, crossing over into Tadeus' realm in the graveyard. The corporeality of the encounter, in which the ghost Tadeus eats, drinks and discusses his sexual past, reiterates that the boundaries between the world of the living and the world of the dead are porous and easily transgressed. During the meeting, the protagonist is able to ask Tadeus the meaning of his deathbed message, the enigmatic '*è stata tutta colpa dell'herpes zoster*' (*Requiem*, p. 40, italics in text). Throughout the text, the protagonist comes to realize that the note refers to remorse, since it appears that

l'herpes zoster sia un po' come il rimorso, se ne sta addormentato dentro di noi e un bel giorno si sveglia e ci attacca, poi torna a dormire perché noi siamo riusciti ad ammansirlo, ma è sempre dentro di noi, non c'è niente da fare contro il rimorso. (*Requiem*, p. 79)

Through his meeting with Tadeus in the cemetery and a meeting with Isabel which occurs in between chapters, the protagonist is able to come to terms with his past, as he learns the reasons behind Isabel's abortion and subsequent suicide. The notion of crossing textual boundaries, where the protagonist steps out of the text to meet Isabel, is reiterated through the presence of the lame lottery-ticket seller, a character from Pessoa's *Book of Disquiet*.³⁹ The lottery-ticket seller recognizes that he has stepped outside of another text, and recognizes that he must return there (*Requiem*, p. 17). This adds a wonderful

³⁸ Charles Klopp notes that the meeting with Isabel occurs in an 'intercapitular' space between chapters seven and eight, and observes that a similar 'intercapitular' encounter occurs between the pianist and Spino in *Il filo dell'orizzonte* (Klopp, 'Aporias and Intertextuality', p. 428).

³⁹ Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, trans. by R. Zenith (Allen Lane: Penguin, 2001).

moment of joy and of play in the idea of permeating boundaries and sets up the text itself as a border space.⁴⁰ The main role of border spaces however is to relieve traumas, and through a dream-world the protagonist is able to cross the boundary separating him from his dead father, and to communicate (and to thus resolve) his remorse about his behaviour during his father's illness.⁴¹ The understanding gained in the border sites in *Requiem* allows the protagonist to resolve traumas of the past and to fulfil the gypsy's prophecy that his day in Lisbon 'sarà un giorno di tribolazione ma anche di purificazione' (*Requiem*, p. 29).

The positivity of the border sites in these quest texts has not been universally accepted. Writing about the meeting between the protagonist and the dead poet Pessoa in *Requiem*, during which the character Pessoa refuses to answer questions about his childhood, Brizio-Skov argues that 'se varcare le soglie dell'aldilà costituisce il massimo della trasgressione e nonostante ciò non è possibile ottenere delle risposte, dobbiamo dedurre che la verità non esiste'.⁴² Similarly, Luigi Surdich suggests that the texts represent recurring quests which offer no meanings or answers.⁴³ However, the protagonists of the quest texts do succeed in finding some answers, and in fact Tabucchi's

⁴⁰ Umberto Eco explores the notion of the transworld identity of a character able to posit hypothetical worlds for himself in 'Lector in Fabula: Pragmatic Strategy in a Metanarrative Text', in *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 200-66.

⁴¹ In *Autobiografie altrui* Tabucchi explains that *Requiem* was born from a dream he had, which is recounted in the text, of his father as a young man, asking his son what he would die from (Tabucchi's father, like the father character in Tabucchi's text, suffered from a cancer of the throat). Although Tabucchi's father knew no foreign languages, in the dream he spoke to his son in Portuguese. The difficulty that Tabucchi had in translating the dream conversation led to Tabucchi's decision to write the text in Portuguese and to entrust the translation to Sergio Vecchio (*Autobiografie altrui*, pp. 15-39).

⁴² Brizio-Skov first argues this in her article 'Dal fantastico al postmoderno: *Requiem* di Antonio Tabucchi', *Italica*, 71, 1 (1994), 96-116 (p. 103), then reasserts the idea in *Navigazioni*, p. 111.

⁴³ Luigi Surdich, 'The Constant Search for Oneself', *Spunti e ricerche*, 12 (1996/1997), 158-72.

analysis of *Notturmo indiano* and *Il filo* could equally be applied to *Requiem*.

Tabucchi writes that:

sebbene sia nel *Notturmo indiano* che nel *Il filo dell'orizzonte*, la ricerca è un ricerca mancata, nel senso 'qu'elle n'aboutit à personne' in fondo c'è una risposta perchè il personaggio, il protagonista, insomma colui che compie la ricerca, anche se non ha trovato l'altro, alla fine cerca se stesso e ha trovato qualcuno: qualcuno che gli ha dato, in qualche modo, delle risposte evasive, probabilmente un'identità incerta.⁴⁴

These moments of understanding and of communication which Tabucchi highlights are very positive experiences, with a very real value. Crucially these occur in border spaces, set between two moments or two worlds, privileging such sites as spaces of realization.

A Shift to Marginality

Border spaces in Tabucchi's later texts however come to be associated more with marginality, exclusion and isolation. Van Gennep's notion of liminality offers a useful way of viewing Tabucchi's later depiction of border spaces. Van Gennep's 1908 text *The Rites of Passage* suggests that rites and rituals mark the key stages of transition in life, such as the move from childhood to adulthood, from unmarried to married, or giving birth.⁴⁵ These rituals may be separated into rites of separation, transition and incorporation, or preliminal, liminal and postliminal rites. Preliminal rites denote the end of one stage in life; liminal rites demonstrate the new isolation from community life; and postliminal rites mark reintegration into communal life at the beginning of a new stage in life. In the liminal stage, an individual is suspended between two

⁴⁴ Tabucchi's comment to *La rivista dei libri* is cited in Bruno Ferraro, 'Antonio Tabucchi's Actors, Characters and Ghosts', *Spunti e ricerche*, 12 (1996/1997), 3-25 (p. 9).

⁴⁵ A. Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. by M. Vizedom (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960).

states of being and is isolated from communal life. Such a sense of isolation and marginalization mark Tabucchi's later depiction of border sites.

Such isolation begins to emerge in *La testa* (1997). The gypsies who find the headless corpse live on the outskirts of Oporto, far from the town and a kilometre from the nearest bus stop. They are geographically situated between towns, linked to neither. They are also trapped in one moment of time, instead of being linked to the past through their magnificent history and to the future through traditional fortune-telling, a skill exemplified by the gypsy in *Requiem*. The gypsies don traditional dress only to beg, and Manolo ponders 'che futuro ci può essere in un mondo come questo per un bambino gitano?' (*La testa*, p. 44). Manolo is the king of the gypsies and retains the title and memories of past splendour but the old glory has evaporated away:

una volta, sì che era il Rey, quando i gitani erano ancora onorati, quando la sua gente percorreva liberamente le pianure dell'Andalusia, quando fabbricavano monili di rame che vendevano nei villaggi e il suo popolo vestiva di nero con nobili cappelli di feltro, e il coltello non era un'arma di difesa in tasca, ma solo un gioiello d'onore fatto d'argento cesellato. Quelli sì, erano i tempi del Rey. Ma ora, ora che erano costretti a vagare, ora che in Spagna gli rendevano la vita impossibile, e in Portogallo, dove si erano rifugiati, forse ancora di più, ora che non c'era più possibilità di fabbricare monili e mantiglie, ora che dovevano arrangiarsi con piccoli furti e accattonaggio, che cazzo di Rey era lui, il Manolo?' (*La testa*, p. 12)

The sense of movement between places and ideas at border sites which characterizes the quest texts has been lost. This emerges even more clearly in the differing depictions of import-export businesses. In *Il filo*, the accountant of the import-export company furnishes Spino with new information to help his quest, whereas in *La testa*, the import-export company 'Stones of Portugal' functions as a front for a drug-smuggling ring and is the site of Damasceno's capture by his murderers.

Drugs are one of the few things able to breach the walls of isolation surrounding the gypsies in Tabucchi's 1999 reportage *Gli Zingari e il Rinascimento: Vivere da Rom a Firenze*.⁴⁶ In this text Tabucchi develops the themes of isolation and marginality facing his fictional gypsies and applies them to the plight of gypsy immigrants in Florence, many of whom have fled the Balkan wars.⁴⁷ Tabucchi highlights the liminal position of the immigrants, who have been forced from their old homes and way of life, yet cannot be integrated into their new society (Italy), leaving them marginalised both geographically and metaphorically. Ironically, the sites of the gypsy camps would have represented border sites *par excellence* in Tabucchi's earlier texts, and would have offered wonderful possibilities of communication and exchange. The Olmatello camp is situated between a railway and a road; Brozzi (home to clandestini) lies between a railway and a river: the Krasnich family live at a fork in the road. The isolation of the gypsies is stressed, as Brozzi is a 'non-luogo' and the Krasnich family 'non esiste'.⁴⁸ The rites of incorporation into Italian society required to liberate the gypsies from their liminal state are rendered impossible by the general antipathy (and sometimes downright hostility) of the Florentine authorities and of some Florentine citizens. An attempt to permanently house (and integrate) an old gypsy couple, albeit in a remote area of the city, is met with protests and placards reading 'Via i Rom da Firenze!', 'Firenze ai Fiorentini!' (*Gli Zingari*, p. 60).

⁴⁶ *Gli Zingari e il Rinascimento: Vivere da Rom a Firenze* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1999).

⁴⁷ In a 'nota' to *La testa*, Tabucchi writes that Manolo the gypsy is, 'se si vuole personaggio di finzione, ma sarebbe meglio dire entità collettiva coagulatasi in entità individuale in una storia alla quale, sul piano della cosiddetta realtà, lui è estraneo, ma che per conto nostro non è estranea (la storia) a certe indimenticabili storie ascoltate dalla voce di vecchi gitani un lontano pomeriggio a Janas, durante la benedizione delle bestie, quando il popolo nomade possedeva ancora i cavalli' (*La testa*, p. 239).

⁴⁸ *Gli Zingari*, pp. 29 and 30.

Tabucchi cites an interview with the *Lega Nord* who are 'contro la zingarizzazione della città', illustrating as well as explaining the way in which the *Lega Nord* fans the flames of racial mistrust, subsequently imprisoning the gypsies in their liminal world (*Gli Zingari*, p. 62). The gypsies cannot return home, cannot be integrated into Italian society, and so are forced to remain on the border of two worlds.

Tabucchi's changing underworld

The gypsies in both *La testa* and *Gli Zingari* are threatened in the underworld which they inhabit, an underworld which no longer has the romanticized air of Tabucchi's earlier texts. Burns observes that the characters in *Il filo* inhabit the margins of society: a remote priest; an ageing accountant; a spinster schoolmistress; a pianist in a dockside bar. These, she suggests, are 'the "good" people who survive unassumingly on the edge of a society which is generally indifferent or hostile to them' (Burns, *Fragments*, p. 67). Burns sees the marginal characters in *La testa* as also 'represented unequivocally as the good people whose goodness can barely be active and effective in society because it is too easy for exploiters in more powerful social positions to prevent them from having a voice' (Burns, *Fragments*, p. 78). Although it is certainly true that the marginal characters of both texts are inherently good, I think it is worth stressing the new brutality which marks Tabucchi's depiction of the underclass. In *Il filo*, the reader learns little of the harsh, practical difficulties of life facing the marginalised characters, with the exception of a certain shabbiness which pervades the text. This is even more surprising if we consider Charles Klopp's observation that *Il filo* is set at a time when Genoa

was dominated by the drug trade (Klopp, 'Aporias and Intertextuality', p. 429). There is little direct violence in the city (with the obvious exception of the initial police shooting) and the most terrifying element of the seedy area around the mortuary is the large rats (*Il filo*, p. 12). Laura Rorato observes that the cityscape does not emerge as threatening, but rather appears to be neatly laid out, like a map.⁴⁹ Paul Diffley also notes the presence of safe spaces in *Il filo*, such as the cinema, where Spino enjoys old American films, using the experience to transform the brutal realities of the mortuary into comfortable filmic images (Diffley, 'The Figure of the Detective', p. 104).

The brutal realities of life on the margins are more forcefully stressed in *La testa*: Manolo the gypsy lives on a decrepit site, forced to make a living from petty theft; Damasceno steals a consignment of drugs in a desperate attempt to help his alcoholic father and his ill mother who cannot afford private medical treatment and cannot obtain care at the overflowing state hospitals; Leonel Torres (the anonymous informant) works long hours but earns a pittance; the prostitute Angela is tortured to satisfy the whim of a client; the transvestite prostitute Wanda is attacked by a client. Angela and Wanda represent a particular shift in Tabucchi's work, as the realities of prostitution impinge upon their lives in a way that is unheard of in Tabucchi's early, romanticised depictions of prostitution. In *Notturmo indiano*, the prostitute Vimala Sar enjoyed a caring, loving relationship with her client Xavier, whilst in *Requiem*, Viriata discusses regional cuisine with the protagonist, and her only task is to wake him after an hour's sleep. Whereas

⁴⁹ Laura Rorato, 'Alla ricerca del diverso: Il mare come estrema soglia ne *Il filo dell'orizzonte* di Antonio Tabucchi e *Verso la foce* di Gianni Celati', in 'E c'è di mezzo il mare': *Lingua, letteratura e civiltà marina*, ed. by Bart Van den Bossche, Michel Bastiaensen, and Corinna Salvadori Lonergan, (Florence: Il Cesati, 2002), pp. 421-435 (p. 425).

the drug addict in *Requiem* peaceably discusses the music of Erik Satie, in *La testa* drugs represent a violent and brutal world. Tellingly, Flavia Brizio-Skov identifies *La testa* as reminiscent of American hard-boiled detective fiction.⁵⁰ It is difficult to imagine Tabucchi's earlier detective novels such as *Il filo* or *Notturmo indiano* eliciting such a response.

I would suggest that this changing representation of border spaces and the underworld dialogues directly with immigration and a realization of the physical and social difficulties faced by immigrants. Paul Ginsborg identifies railway stations as the main haunt for the wave of immigrants into Italy in the 1990s (Ginsborg, *Italy and its Discontents*, pp. 63-64). The growth of 'visible' immigrants such as North African street hawkers, and subsequent violent attacks on immigrants, highlights the realities of an underworld which can no longer be romanticized.⁵¹ Movements such as 'Ripulire Firenze', seeking to physically expel immigrants to the margins of society, impact on the meaning of border space, which can no longer be perceived solely in terms of its postmodernist theoretical connotations, divorced from the socio-political connotations of living on the borders, excluded and marginalised.

⁵⁰ Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, pp. 151-53. Carlo Lucarelli's depictions of Bologna would offer an interesting comparison with *La testa perduta*, as they too focus on a dangerous and chilling underworld. *Nikita* (Trieste: Edizioni EL, 1997) depicts the bloody battles between gangs, whilst *Febbre gialla* (Trieste: Edizioni EL, 1997) explores the fate of child immigrants brought to Bologna to provide a slave-labour force.

⁵¹ The changing face of immigration into Italy, the rise in violence against immigrants and Italian reactions are outlined in: Jacqueline Andall, 'New Migrants, Old Conflicts: The Recent Immigration into Italy', *The Italianist*, 10 (1990), 151-73; J. Andall and R. King, 'The Geography and Economic Sociology of Recent Immigration into Italy', *Modern Italy*, 4, 2 (1999), 135-58; Martin Clark, *Modern Italy*, p. 402; Ginsborg, *Italy and its Discontents*, pp. 62-68; Vanessa Maher, 'Immigration and Social Identities' in *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, ed. by David Forgacs and Robert Lumley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 166-77.

Some conclusions

A process of darkening comes to pervade Tabucchi's representations of space, including national, regional and border spaces. Although the issues may at times be played out in Portuguese space, they engage nonetheless with Italian concerns. I would suggest that this occurs for several reasons. Firstly, Tabucchi's depiction of a culture he loves and feels is a second 'Patria', is informed by the general trends which, as an engaged intellectual, he sees about him in Italy; secondly, Portugal represents in many ways a magnified version of Italy's problems - poorer, more politically unstable, more geographically isolated – and so offers a good point of comparison; thirdly, Portugal offers more emotional distance for both the writer and the reader when considering Italian issues; fourthly, the slightly more exotic landscape offers a more dynamic reading experience - although *Il filo* and *La testa* recount very similar stories, the latter, set in Portugal, was far more popular and widely-read; finally, if the trends depicted are Europe-wide, as Tabucchi suggests when discussing *Sostiene Pereira*, then they may be explored in any European space or context.⁵² These trends of racism and marginalization come to impinge upon Tabucchi's celebration of border sites, as privileged postmodern spaces of encounter and exchange, and to darken his representation of regionality. Tabucchi depicts and unpacks stereotypes at both national and regional levels, suggesting that understanding can bridge gaps and move Europe closer to a more ideal state, as embodied by the French Enlightenment. Europe's divide does not lie in north/south polarities but rather in the spectre of a rebirth of the past and the possibilities of the future.

⁵² *La testa*'s greater popularity may also, of course, be due to its sensationalist nature and to the 'hard-boiled' characters.

In order to achieve the best of all possible worlds, Tabucchi stresses, the processes of reading and of writing history must be strategically and thoughtfully employed.

Part 3:

The Challenge of Communication

3.1. Committed Literature in an Unstable World

The instability of knowledge and communication

Committed writing traditionally seeks to communicate truths to the reader; truths about History, the world we live in and the possibility of change. Such strategies rely on two notions: firstly, that there are fixed reference points to relate ideas to; secondly, that language is able to effectively and unequivocally communicate ideas which independently exist, seeking expression firstly in speech and then transcription in writing, following the Aristotelian tradition.¹ Tabucchi and Sciascia, however, are working in a climate which has been heavily influenced by post-structuralism, where both of these central concepts have been questioned and undermined, mainly by Derrida and Barthes.

Derrida's 1966 lecture 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences' may be taken as the starting point for post-structuralism.² The essay looks at the way in which the fixed reference points of Western intellectual tradition have been undermined and eroded by what he terms a series of 'events', which do not constitute a single event or doctrine but are embodied by Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, Freud's analysis of consciousness and Heidegger's destruction of metaphysics and onto-theology (Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 280). He describes the process as the removal of the centre

¹ Derrida outlines Aristotle's belief that spoken words are symbols of mental experience and that written words are symbols of spoken words. The spoken word therefore has a more immediate proximity to the mind. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 11.

² Derrida's lecture is reproduced in his text, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 278-293. Peter Barry identifies this lecture as the starting point of post-structuralism in his text *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, 2nd edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 66.

from a structure, where the centre may be understood as the key concepts of Western thought: God, Man, transcendentalism, consciousness and so on. This centre rooted a structure (the development of ideas), allowing some movement of ideas but also placed a limit on the extent to which ideas could freely move around, the extent to which the 'play' of ideas was possible. Derrida writes that

the function of this center was not only to orient, balance and structure the structure – one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure – but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure. (Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 278)

On the one hand 'the center of a structure permits the play of its elements inside the total form' but nevertheless 'the center also closes off the play which it opens up and makes possible' (Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 279). In Western thought the fixed reference points allowed ideas to develop and move to an extent, but gave them a definite point of orientation. In this new de-centred universe, however, there is no centre, no authority against which to measure ideas, no fixed point to deviate from. In such a world there are no facts, only interpretations which cannot be validated, and hence the notion of communicating truth through writing becomes problematized.

The process is further complicated by new theoretical formulations of language itself, as language is unstable and, as Barthes argues in his 1968 essay 'The Death of the Author', '*writing* can no longer designate an operation of recording, representation, "depiction"'.³ In his essay of the same year, 'Différance', Derrida examines the process of writing and language, developing

³ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 142-48 (p. 146), italics in text.

Saussure's concept of the sign.⁴ Drawing on Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, Derrida reiterates that the signifier is arbitrary and differential rather than referential. Derrida cites Saussure's notion that 'the idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs around it' and goes on to outline the consequences of this notion (Derrida, 'Différance', p. 63). The first of these is that 'the signified concept is never present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself. Essentially and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences' (Derrida, 'Différance', p. 63). As each signifier is defined wholly by difference, by what it is not, then the presence of the signifier evokes the spectre of its opposite, in what Derrida calls the 'trace'. He defines the trace in his 1967 text *Of Grammatology* as 'the opening of the first exteriority in general, the enigmatic relationship of the living to its other and of an inside to an outside' (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 70). Hence each time a signifier is employed, rather than evoke a specific meaning it implies a concept which is contaminated by its opposite: it does not suggest a pure and absolute concept but an ambiguous one.

Derrida's concept of *différance* does not just focus on difference but also deferral. In writing, the signifier comes to replace the signified, as meaning is deferred. Thus, the imagined presence of meaning is pushed away, deferred by the signifier. Whereas from a phonocentric point of view the signifier attempts to efface itself, aiming to further the idea that the logos exists independently and is

⁴ The lecture was given to the *Société française de la philosophie* and is reproduced in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 61-79.

merely transcribed, in writing, the presence of the signifier is all that remains, stressing the existence of language rather than ideas. In *Of Grammatology* Derrida writes that the phonic substance 'presents itself as the nonexterior', effacing itself and attempting to ignore how the signifier does not issue directly from the idea (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 7). In writing, all that exists is the signifier, deferring meaning. The trace is temporal as well as differential, and as 'the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called present element is related to something other than itself', then the trace is 'related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past' and constitutes 'what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not, to what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as modified present' (Derrida, 'Différance', pp. 65-66). Language then cannot communicate a present which is uncontaminated by past or future.

Derrida re-evaluates many of the divisions and binaries that have shaped Western thought in the light of his work on the trace. In *Of Grammatology* he writes that 'all dualisms, all theories of the immortality of the soul or of the spirit, as well as all monisms, spiritualist or materialist, dialectical or vulgar' belong to 'a metaphysics whose entire history was compelled to strive toward the reduction of the trace' (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 71). Thus, once we fully consider the implications of the trace, then the old binaries are problematized and undermined. He reiterates this point in the essay 'Différance', stressing the need to:

reconsider all the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is constructed and on which our discourse lives, not in order to see opposition erase itself but to see what indicates that each of the terms must appear as

différance of the other, as the other differed and deferred. (Derrida, 'Différance', p. 70)

Binaries and oppositions become contaminated, with no clear concepts.

The implications of the de-centred universe and the instability of language for committed writers are profound. Both problematize concepts of absolute truths, of fixed reference points against which to measure ideas and facts and question the extent to which an idea may be expressed without evoking the exact opposite of what the author intended to write. In this chapter I wish to look at the ways in which Sciascia interacts in particular with the idea of a de-centred universe, at his methods as he seeks to determine whether truths can exist and the ways in which they may be discovered and communicated. I then wish to examine the ways in which Tabucchi enters into dialogue with the concept of communication as he explores the implications of the instability of language.

The detective approaches

In a de-centred universe, Sciascia refuses to accept that nothing can be known at all. Two texts of the 1970s, *La scomparsa di Majorana* (1975) and *L'affaire Moro* (1978) demonstrate a belief in the human capacity to discover at least an idea of a truth.⁵ Whilst revealing an awareness of the limits of concrete truths, Sciascia attempts to construct various hypotheses, which he measures against a range of clues, seeking to discover which is at least the most likely, and the most reasonable assumption. Sciascia, in short, assumes the role of the detective as a way of dealing with the concept of unstable knowledge. However, his choice of

⁵ *La scomparsa di Majorana* appears in II, pp. 205-70; *L'affaire Moro* appears in II, pp. 463-599.

the detective mode also allows him to dialogue with socio-political concerns. As Klaus and Knight argue in their introduction to a collection of essays on detective fiction:

crime fiction is a form that, by being so close to the populist grass roots, is in direct contact with social and political attitudes and so capable of revealing to a sufficiently acute analysis the point where culture and society interrelate.⁶

Sciascia's shift in detective model between *La scomparsa di Majorana* and *L'affaire Moro* engages both with wider cultural concerns about the stability of knowledge and with more focused socio-political concerns in the *anni di piombo*.

Fiction to fact

Sciascia is certainly better known for his fictional detective texts than for those in which he adopts the role of the detective himself. Joseph Farrell argues that Sciascia represents the first Italian writer to use the detective genre systematically.⁷ Yet even in Sciascia's early detective novels, truth appears as a problematic concept. Certainly the novels do not fulfil the traditional expectations of a detective novel: that the detective's superior intellect (or luck) will ensure that the criminal is caught and that social order is restored after the crime. Sciascia's early texts, *Il giorno della civetta* (1961) and *A ciascuno il suo* (1966), recount the insurmountable obstacles facing a detective who seeks to discover and punish a criminal in a Sicily dominated by the mafia.⁸ *Il giorno della civetta* recounts the investigations of Captain Bellodi, a northerner sent to Sicily. Bellodi

⁶ Gustav H. Klaus and Stephen Knight, eds., *The Art of Murder: New Essays on Detective Fiction* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1988), p. 8.

⁷ Joseph Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 61.

⁸ *Il giorno della civetta* appears in I, pp. 387-483; *A ciascuno il suo* appears in I, pp. 775-887.

believes in justice and the equality of the law, but is unable to secure a conviction for a mafia killing when faced with an insuperable wall of *omertà* and eventually returns to his native Parma, defeated. In *A ciascuno il suo* the amateur sleuth Laurana investigates the murder of Roscio and is eventually murdered himself, deemed 'un cretino' for having attempted to meddle in the affairs of others (*A ciascuno*, I, p. 887). These texts demonstrate that the quest for truth is problematized in Sicily, where different rules and norms apply. Farrell suggests that Sciascia's detective novels do not restore faith in the social order (in the manner of Agatha Christie's texts, for example), but rather underline the chaos inherent in it. The usual union of investigator and society pitted against the criminal is replaced in Sciascia's novels by the union of society and the criminal pitted against the investigator (Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, pp. 63-64).

However, in these early texts, a truth does exist. The reader (like Bellodi and most of the village) is aware that Don Mariano, the local mafia boss, ordered the murder in *Il giorno della civetta*. Similarly the reader and other characters in *A ciascuno il suo* realize that Roscio was murdered by his wife and Rosello. Ratiocinatic deduction allows the detective to identify the perpetrator of a crime but is insufficient to secure a conviction. And yet, in the detective novels of the 1970s, *Il contesto* (1971) and *Todo modo* (1974), the very notion of truth which can be discerned is problematized.⁹ The texts reveal a multiplicity of answers, with no clear solutions at the end. The silence here is not *omertà*, but rather, as Filippo Cilluffo suggests, the silence 'di un sistema sempre capace di fornire

⁹ *Il contesto* appears in II, pp. 1-96; *Todo modo* appears in II, pp. 97-203.

un'altra verità, un altro contesto'.¹⁰ Marco Belpoliti argues that the truth which emerges from these texts is not a synonym of clarity and light, but rather of darkness and obscurity.¹¹ *Il contesto* details the investigations of the policeman Rogas into a series of murders of prosecutors and judges. His search leads him to discover a complex web of corruption whereby the governing elites are conspiring with the opposition, with the military and with supposedly revolutionary groups in order to bring about a state of emergency and to subsequently impose an authoritarian regime. Eventually, Rogas is killed, possibly by the police (his own colleagues), possibly by revolutionaries. Added to this inversion of norms is the way in which Rogas begins to identify with the murderer Cres, experiencing 'la sensazione di trovarsi di fronte a uno specchio' when encountering him (*Il contesto*, II, p. 76). The binaries of policeman and criminal, government and opposition, government and revolutionaries all break down in the text. Indeed, Claude Ambroise sees a key theme of Sciascia's texts as being the way in which he exposes the grey area between two binaries.¹² In this text Sciascia is showing the limits of binaries and the difficulty of discovering a truth: at the end of the text the reader has some ideas about who may have killed Rogas (the police, the revolutionaries), but no clear answers. There is even less

¹⁰ Filippo Cilluffo, *Due scrittori siciliani* (Caltanissetta-Rome: Salvatore Sciascia, 1974), pp. 109-10.

¹¹ Marco Belpoliti, *Settanta* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), p. 9.

¹² Claude Ambroise, *Invito alla lettura di Leonardo Sciascia* (Milan: Mursia, 1974), pp. 138-39. Ambroise also examines the breakdown of the fascist/socialist binary in *L'antimonio*, when fighters recognize that the other soldiers are farmers and workers like themselves. Ambroise observes that the mafia/police binary is problematized by the way in which Bellodi and don Mariano recognize each other as 'un uomo' in *Il giorno della civetta*. Gillian Ania has more recently signalled other ways in which binaries are challenged in *Il giorno della civetta*, observing that it is difficult to see don Mariano as wholly negative when he is so respected in his village. She notes that the presence of an informer is unusual in detective fiction, and that as he belongs to neither one side nor the other, his actions create a new grey area. Gillian Ania, *Fortunes of the Firefly: Sciascia's Art of Detection* (Market Harborough: University Texts, 1996), pp. 29-31.

certainty in *Todo Modo*, where an artist witnesses a series of murders at a religious retreat attended by the ruling elites. The webs of corruption which emerge suggest so many motives for the killings that any number of interpretations may pose as the truth. There is no way of finding a definite truth.

The case of Majorana

Sciascia's detective novels increasingly demonstrate an awareness of the difficulty of finding truth. Such a search for truth forms the central focus of the two factual investigations that Sciascia undertakes in the mid 1970s, *La scomparsa di Majorana* and *L'affaire Moro*. In these texts Sciascia himself becomes the detective and so needs a detective figure (and methodology) upon whom to model himself. The absence of a strong and deep-rooted Italian tradition of detective writing forces Sciascia to look abroad, and for *La scomparsa di Majorana*, Sciascia chooses the model of Edgar Allen Poe's Dupin.¹³ *La scomparsa di Majorana* focuses on two aspects of the disappearance of the physicist Ettore Majorana in 1938, after he left two suicide notes (one addressed to his family, the other to colleagues at the Institute of Physics in Naples) yet then

¹³ In his excellent study *Tutti i colori del giallo: Il giallo italiano da De Marchi a Scerbanenco a Camilleri* (Venice: Marsiglia, 2002), Luca Crovi examines the history of the *giallo* in Italy. He outlines the way in which the 'protogialli', which were written in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century, by writers such as Matilde Serao, Francesco Mastriani, Carolina Invernizio, Franco Mistrali, Alessandro Sauli, mixed detective fiction with gothic and horror traits. Detective stories became popular between 1910 and 1930 in Italy, when they began to appear in special series, of which the most famous was Mondadori's 'Libri Gialli', which began in 1929. Yet the majority of stories were translations of foreign texts (especially those featuring Nat Pinkerton, Joe Petrosino and Nick Carter), rather than being written by Italians about Italy. Although some Italian writers, such as Alessandro Varaldo, Luciano Folgore and Tito Antonio Spagnol were published, the genre was known chiefly through foreign fiction. Italian detective fiction suffered yet more setbacks in the 1930s and 1940s, when Fascist directives forbade firstly that texts detail any crime going unpunished in Italy and later the publication of any detective fiction at all, which was perceived as detrimental to public morality. As a result, there was little indigenous tradition for Sciascia to draw upon.

sent a telegraph saying he had changed his mind and would return. The first element which Sciascia investigates is the final fate of Majorana: whether the scientist did commit suicide or whether it was an elaborate ruse to escape to another town or even country. The second element, on which the majority of the text is centred, is an exploration of Majorana's motives for escaping, whether in life to another place or in death to another realm. The police at the time could shed little light on either matter, and after a brief investigation concluded that Majorana must have committed suicide. A deeper engagement is required to solve this mystery, and Sciascia tells us that 'soltanto un investigatore avrebbe accettato di giocare una simile partita: il cavaliere Carlo Auguste Dupin, nelle pagine di un racconto di Poe' (*La scomparsa*, II, p. 217). In the absence of the fictitious hero, Sciascia himself steps forward. The choice of Dupin is interesting, as in his 'Breve storia del romanzo poliziesco', Sciascia credits Dupin with 'una lucida e visionaria intelligenza [...] capace di ordinare matematicamente i dati e le incognite di qualsiasi cosa si presenti come mistero', with the result that 'Dupin arriva a risolvere il mistero con un procedimento di pura e quasi astratta razionalità'.¹⁴ Dupin does not require the genius or divine enlightenment of fictional detectives such as Holmes, and through his painstaking use of logic offers Sciascia an attainable model to follow.

Sciascia implements Dupin's technique of mathematically ordering facts in order to shed some light on Majorana's final fate. He tells us that 'la sera del 25 marzo, Ettore Majorana partiva col "postale" Napoli-Palermo, alle 22,30. Aveva impostata una lettera per Carelli, direttore dell'Istituto di Fisica, e una ne

¹⁴ 'Breve storia del romanzo poliziesco' in *Cruciverba*, II, pp. 1181-1196 (pp. 1186-87).

aveva lasciata in albergo indirizzato ai familiari' (*La scomparsa, II*, p. 253). In his letter to Carrelli, Majorana wrote that he would remember his colleagues at the Institute 'almeno fino alle undici di questa sera, e possibilmente anche dopo' (*La scomparsa, II*, p. 254). Sciascia analyses this statement and reads it as a clue that Majorana did not mean to commit suicide. Sciascia reasons that if Majorana were to throw himself overboard at eleven o'clock, a mere thirty minutes into the ferry crossing when all the passengers would still be milling about on deck, then he would almost certainly be spotted and rescued. The reference to eleven o'clock must therefore, Sciascia posits, be a clue to Majorana's future plans: 'ci deve essere in questo numero - undici - un qualche mistero, un qualche messaggio. Forse un matematico, un fisico, un'esperto di cose marittime, potrebbe tentare di decifrarlo' (*La scomparsa, II*, p. 254). The letter which Majorana posted to his family also appears to support Sciascia's theory that the number eleven is a clue. Majorana exhorts his family to shun mourning, stressing that if they really did feel compelled to carry out this ritual, then they should limit it to three days. Sciascia attempts to explore the relevance of Majorana's choice of three days of mourning, hypothesizing that the three from this message and the eleven from the note to colleagues should be paired, making fourteen a crucial clue. Sciascia cannot discover the code of these numbers but is convinced that they do have significance, and this, paired with his discovery of other factors, such as the fact that Majorana took his passport and cash with him when he disappeared, leads Sciascia to conclude that Majorana's disappearance was too elaborate and calculated to point to suicide. Sciascia cannot find out Majorana's destination,

despite exploring various possibilities, ranging from the belief that the scientist retreated into monastic life to the hypothesis that he went abroad, yet nonetheless Sciascia is convinced that the scientist did not commit suicide. His rational and Dupin-esque enquiries and reasoning have brought him to a truth.

Dupin's ratiocinatic approach also provides a methodology for investigating the motives behind Majorana's disappearance. Sciascia explores this by reading and analysing not only Majorana's letters but also his actions, conversations and behaviour of the preceding years, treating the physicist's past as a set of clues through which to view his disappearance. The emphasis on Sciascia's readings indicates that Majorana had foreseen developments in physics which would lead to the possibility of building an atomic bomb and wished to distance himself from the research. Sciascia is convinced that Majorana was capable of carrying out such developments, and insists that the physicist made a conscious choice to disappear.¹⁵ Sciascia bases this notion on clues detectable in Majorana's behaviour some years before his disappearance. He looks in particular at Majorana's habit of developing complex new formulae on the tram in the morning, scribbling them on a cigarette packet, and then throwing away the

¹⁵ Doubts as to whether Majorana could have developed an atomic bomb have been raised most vocally by Edoardo Amaldi. Sciascia responded to these doubts in an interview with *Mondo Operaio* in December 1978, which is reproduced in Valter Vecellio and Leonardo Sciascia, *La palma va a nord* (Milan: Gammalibri, 1982), p.143. Sciascia states that: 'È l'opinione di Amaldi. Altri ammettono questa possibilità. Lea Ritter, una studiosa che ha prefato l'edizione tedesca del mio libro, aveva mostrato a Heisenberg, poco prima che morisse, il capitolo che lo riguardava. Heisenberg le aveva scritto che quello che io dicevo dei suoi rapporti con Majorana era esatissimo. Ho poi intervistato Ida Noddock, che aveva scritto nel '34 un articolo in cui sosteneva che quelli di via Panisperna avevano ottenuto la scissione dell'atomo e non se ne erano accorti. Bastava che Majorana avesse letto il mio articolo, dice la Noddack, ciò che era possibilissimo, per rendersi conto di quello che era stato scoperto, e andare, per conto suo, avanti. Del resto sono stati quelli di via Panisperna a scrivere che la Provvidenza li aveva "accecati" impedendo loro di trarre tutte le spaventose conseguenze delle loro scoperte. Perché Majorana non avrebbe potuto vedere quel che gli altri non avevano visto per ragioni di "provvidenza"?'.

cigarette packet (and formulae) after having dazzled colleagues with the new idea, ignoring their anxious pleas to publish the new concepts. Sciascia reads such actions as belonging to an 'istinto di conservazione. Doppiamente, possiamo oggi dire, s'appartenevano all'istinto di conservazione: per sé, per la specie umana' (*La scomparsa*, II, p. 228). Following on from this, Sciascia reads Majorana's unusually friendly relationship with the German Physicist Heisenberg as evidence that Majorana had ambiguous feelings towards scientific progress, as Majorana generally preferred to work alone and socialised little. Heisenberg gained recognition for his theory on protons and neutrons in the nucleus, which Majorana had (independently) developed six months previously. Yet rather than resent Heisenberg, Majorana conceived for the German physicist 'un sentimento di ammirazione' [...] Heisenberg gli è come un amico sconosciuto: uno che senza saperlo, senza conoscerlo, l'ha come salvata da un pericolo, gli ha come evitato un sacrificio' (*La scomparsa*, II, p. 229). Heisenberg, by publishing the theory that brought the use of atomic energy that much nearer, had taken away Majorana's dilemma about advancing science, but in a possibly harmful way. Many of the actions and statements by Majorana that Sciascia reads are quite solid clues towards his analysis of Majorana's motives, such as Majorana's declarations to his sister that physics or physicists were 'su una strada sbagliata'.¹⁶ Other 'clues' however are less convincing: Sciascia devotes an entire chapter, of a total of eleven, to the story of a family dispute involving a cousin and some uncles of Majorana. Majorana's baby cousin was burned in a cot, and a servant girl confessed to the deed. The girl then changed her testimony to

¹⁶ *La scomparsa*, II, p. 248. Majorana's sister did not remember his precise words.

implicate Majorana's uncles, claiming that they had ordered her to carry out the murder. Sciascia devotes a good deal of space to the legal wrangling of the incident and to the preceding family dispute that seemed to make the servant girl's claims tenable, concluding that Majorana would have been greatly affected by the incident and that the image of the burned child would have made him more conscious of the potential dangers of atomic energy. Sciascia reads the family tragedy as a clue pointing towards Majorana making certain decisions about his future.

Although Sciascia's fictional detectives were unable to find truths, Sciascia believes that through his reasoned and Dupin-esque approach he has succeeded in resolving the mystery surrounding Majorana's disappearance, finding answers as to whether or not he committed suicide and why he may have chosen to vanish. The truth which Sciascia discovers owes nothing to Belpoliti's notion of a truth based on darkness and obscurity. Sciascia has successfully used rationality to unravel a mystery. The truth which he finds reflects the Enlightenment ideology of furthering human happiness, as Majorana deliberately eschews a path that would bring suffering through the creation of a bomb. In discovering such a truth, Sciascia brings a light to the *anni di piombo*, suggesting a means for reducing human misery in the 1970s, by rejecting violence in the name of ideology. Sciascia's unequivocal denunciation of a Manichean binary of the 'schiavi' scientists seeking to develop atomic energy for Hitler and the 'liberi' scientists attempting to create the same destructive force at Los Alamos for Truman has clear implications for the *anni di piombo* (*La scomparsa, II*, pp. 238-

39). By insisting that there was no difference then between the forces that created and used atomic missiles, as they sought to cause untold human suffering in order to further an ideological position, it would seem that Sciascia is commenting not only on events in the 1930s but also on the Italian situation in the 1970s, where what should have been a stark contrast between the positions of the right and the left became blurred by the use of paramilitaries by both sides.¹⁷ The use of violence to achieve political ends blurs ideological boundaries as much in the 1970s as in the 1930s. In *La scomparsa*, Sciascia uses his detection to engage both with notions of truth and reasoning and also with the climate of terrorism.

The Moro affair

The light of reason which illuminates both Sciascia's methodology and conclusions of *La scomparsa* is dimmed, although not extinguished, in his 1978 investigation *L'affaire Moro*. Marco Belpoliti sees this text as the last chapter of a detective novel that Sciascia began at the beginning of the 1970s (Belpoliti, *Settanta*, p. 12). If this is the case, then this chapter is one of the darkest of the novel, as Sciascia investigates the disappearance of Aldo Moro, kidnapped and then executed by the Red Brigades in 1978, during the blackest days of the *anni di piombo*. Much remains unresolved and, as Belpoliti suggests, the text could easily have been titled 'Il mistero Moro', since despite Sciascia's attempts to find answers, 'al suo interno resta sempre un centro vuoto, un'ombra che non può essere rischiarata' (Belpoliti, *Settanta*, p. 12). Certainly, Sciascia's ratiocinatic

¹⁷ Paul Ginsborg examines the terrorism of both sides in *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 348-405. See also Norman Kogan, *A Political History of Italy: The Post-War Years* (New York: Praeger, 1983), pp. 287-88.

approach of *La scomparsa* falls short in this world of mirrors, darkness and obscurity.

There are no concrete clues illuminating Moro's time in prison and so Sciascia must turn to Moro's letters, written inside the 'people's prison' to discover any truths. Sciascia saw these letters as containing valuable information, representing 'messaggi da decifrare', despite the claims of the *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) leaders that the trauma of imprisonment meant that '*il Moro che parla dalla "prigione del popolo" non è il Moro che abbiamo conosciuto*'.¹⁸ The deciphering that Sciascia must employ requires a very high level of interpretation, as Moro was well-versed in the art of 'nondire'; thus in one instance Sciascia reads Moro's phrase 'penso che un preventivo passo della Santa Sede (o anche da altri? Chi?) potrebbe essere utile' as an indication that Moro believed that he was being held in the grounds of the Vatican.¹⁹ Later on Sciascia interprets the phrase 'se non avessi una famiglia così bisognosa di me sarebbe un po' diverso' as an allusion to the Christian Democrat party and to Moro's role within it (*Moro, II*, p. 504). Both of these conclusions are based on highly subjective reasoning.

The mathematical Dupinesque methodology used to decipher Majorana's letters proves insufficient to analyse Moro's letters. Sciascia rules out the logical process as the most fitting tool to analyse the Moro case, however he does so in a very ratiocinatic way, suggesting the methodology, then dismissing it using the process of reasoning. Sciascia observes that Dupin's methodology is unsuitable,

¹⁸ *Moro, II*, p. 490; p. 514, italics in text. Giovanni Spadolini presents a very different contemporary view of Moro as a man and the value of Moro's letters in *Diario del dramma Moro (marzo-maggio 1978): I cinquantquattro giorni che hanno cambiato l'Italia* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1978).

¹⁹ *Moro, II*, p. 471; p. 489.

as it requires identification with the criminal, a process problematized in the Moro case by the need to identify both with Moro as he writes the letters, and with the *Brigate rosse* (BR) as they censor the letters (*Moro, II*, pp. 489-90). Thus, at a point where the processes of reasoning are unsuitable, Sciascia turns to Borges' approach, as the lengthy quotation from *Ficciones* illustrates.²⁰ Sciascia defines the Borgesian lens in a 1978 interview with *Lotta continua* as 'questo gioco della coincidenza, questi due piani in cui la realtà diventa finzione, questa specie di circolarità che ha stabilito tra la letteratura e la vita. È veramente strano questo mondo di coincidenze, coincidenze straordinarie'.²¹ This methodology seems antithetical to Sciascia's previous faith in an Enlightenment truth, however, he retains his belief that even using this process he may locate a truth, stating that there exists 'questa trasmutazione di verità in finzione, di finzione in verità. Però "c'è" la verità' (Vecellio, *La palma va a nord*, p.108). By analysing the Moro case through the prism of fiction, Sciascia is able to assert the truth that the affair was deliberately covered up and that the government played a role which owed little to appearances. By using a literary lens to de-code Moro's letters, Sciascia is able to find meanings in them which may have been pertinent to Moro's location but which were certainly proof of Moro's coherent state of

²⁰ Sciascia cites: 'Ho già detto che si tratta di un romanzo poliziesco...A distanza di sette anni, mi è impossibile recuperare i dettagli dell'azione, ma eccone i piani generale, quale l'impovertiscono (quale lo purificano) le lacune della mia memoria. C'è un indecifrabile assassinio nelle pagine iniziali, una lenta discussione nelle intermedie, una soluzione nelle ultime. Poi, risolto ormai l'enigma c'è un paragrafo vasto e retrospettivo che contiene questa frase: "Tutti credettero che l'incontro dei due giocatori di scacchi fosse stato casuale". Questa frase lascia capire che la soluzione è sbagliata. Il lettore, inquieto, rivede i capitoli sospetti e scopre un'altra soluzione, la vera' (*Moro, II*, p. 565).

²¹ The interview is reproduced in *La palma va a nord*, p. 109.

mind. Sciascia is able to find the truth that Moro was sane, not insane as the *DC* claimed, and to discern a hidden truth that he was condemned by his own party.

Clearly owing a great deal to Belpoliti's description of darkness and obscurity, this truth is accessible through different means, but continues to exist. Tellingly, although Sciascia employs Borges' methodology as a means of investigating Moro's letters, as a way of decoding the double meanings and hidden messages of Moro's 'nondire', in his 1982 Parliamentary Minority Report, submitted on behalf of the Radical party, Sciascia reverts to a Dupinesque mathematical enquiry.²² In this report, Sciascia moves away from abstract speculation that Moro was a victim of unnamed forces who condemned him both to prison and later to a lasting portrait of a man demented, and focuses instead on the definite clues which support such an analysis. Sciascia painstakingly collates a damning list of evidence which all point to the conclusion that the *BR* were helped by outside forces, possibly (and indeed probably) located within the state itself. Sciascia brings together the following elements: evidence from the security guard's widow, who claimed that her husband's requests for an armoured vehicle were repeatedly ignored; evidence of a photocopier found in a *BR* hideout which had miraculously been transported from the offices of the Secret Services; and evidence from the *procuratore generale* that the police investigations had been an 'operazione di parata più che ricerche' (*Moro, II*, p. 582). Sciascia gathers these clues and orders them with clarity to prove a case of, at best, police

²² The report was submitted in 1982, four years after the original text was published. Sciascia's political career began when he was a city councillor in Palermo from 1975-77, as an independent linked to the *Partito comunista italiano (PCI)*, and he became a deputy for the Radical party in 1979. Parliamentary Minority Reports were also submitted by the *Partito socialista italiano (PSI)*, Liberals and *Movimento sociale italiano (MSI)*.

incompetence, and at worst, collusion.²³ Sciascia's rational enquiry allows him to illuminate the murky truth of the Moro affair.

Even in a case in which logic seems to fail as horrific events unfold, Sciascia's faith in logical processes allows him to return to proceedings some time later and to re-evaluate them in a reasoned manner. The truth which Sciascia establishes is, as Belpoliti notes, one of darkness and obscurity rather than of clarity and light, but crucially it is one which can be discerned through ratiocinatic methods which begin to recognize shapes within the darkness. Thus, the truth, highlighting collusion between terrorists and the state, is not necessarily a positive one, but the fact that it may be known brings hope.²⁴ The continued possibility of employing rational processes in a world made irrational in the *anni di piombo* is an important step and permits Sciascia to achieve his goal of establishing the truth. Sciascia's use of the Borgesian lens to read Moro's letters seems to accept that non-rational interpretative processes offer the best means of understanding a de-centred world, however this approach has a very short life span, and Sciascia rapidly reverts to his Enlightenment methodology. In many ways, this privileging of rational cognitive processes sets Sciascia apart from writers such as Tabucchi, who privilege non-rational modes of expression such as dreams and the unconscious.²⁵ Sciascia's methods are, however, effective, and in

²³ Robert Drake suggests that Sciascia's text represents 'the pioneering formulation of the conspiracy theory' in his book *The Aldo Moro Murder Case* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 95.

²⁴ It is perhaps worth questioning whether Sciascia's earlier truths, which denote collusion between the mafia and the state, represent clarity and light rather than darkness and obscurity.

²⁵ In Tabucchi's *Il filo dell'orizzonte*, the protagonist Spino's detection leads Tabucchi to conclude that 'il filo dell'orizzonte, di fatto, è un luogo geometrico, perché si sposta mentre noi ci spostiamo' (*Il filo*, p. 107); this is a conclusion far removed from Sciascia's belief in logical

1979 he states that 'il mio programma è quello della verità: la verità sul terrorismo, sul caso Moro'.²⁶ By focussing primarily on rational means, supplemented occasionally by non-rational processes, Sciascia moves a long way to establishing such truths.

Language Games and Communication

Like Sciascia, Tabucchi prizes the detective novel as a way of engaging both with the socio-political climate and with questions of truth and language. In a 1991 interview, Tabucchi states that 'il giallo è forse la migliore maniera di porre delle domande oggi, purché non sia il giallo banale, quello che deve scoprire chi è l'assassino'.²⁷ Tabucchi's detective fiction however maintains the focus of his other texts, interrogating the value of signs and the possibility of communicating a truth, rather than analysing which methodology is the most effective in locating a truth.

Tabucchi's novels published during the 1980s will form the basis for my analysis of the representation of communication, as notions of multiplicity and *rovescio* are foregrounded during this period. I will draw upon *Il gioco del rovescio* (1981), *Donna di Porto Pim* (1983), *Notturmo indiano* (1984), *Piccoli equivoci senza importanza* (1985), *Il filo dell'orizzonte* (1986) and *I volatili del*

reasoning as a means of discovering a definite answer. *Il filo* was first published in 1986; page references are to the 2002 Feltrinelli edition.

²⁶ The interview with *Telegiornale di Sicilia* and *Giornale di Sicilia* is reproduced in Vecellio, *La palma va a nord*, p. 183.

²⁷ Antonio Borsari, 'Cos'è una vita se non viene raccontata? Conversazione con Antonio Tabucchi', *Italienisch: Zeitschrift für Italienische Sprache und Literatur*, 13, no. 2, 26 (November 1991), 2-23 (p. 8). Tabucchi cites Sciascia as an example of detective fiction which does 'porre delle domande', and reiterates his praise of Sciascia in an interview with Arnould De Liedekerke some six years later. Arnould De Liedekerke, 'Antonio Tabucchi le contrebandier', *Magazine Littéraire*, July-August 1997, pp. 154-59 (p. 157).

Beato Angelico (1987).²⁸ In her monograph on Tabucchi, Flavia Brizio-Skov suggests that these texts, (in addition to *Requiem*, published in 1991)²⁹, dialogue most fervently with post-modernist discourse, de-stabilizing traditional narrative by drawing the reader into metanarrative games such as mysteries, oppositions and reversals and thus forcing the reader to question reality.³⁰ However I would suggest that the very instances of multiple possibilities and *rovescio* which Brizio-Skov outlines as wholly related to ontological concerns do in fact engage primarily with the notion of communication and the possibility of transmitting any kind of truth. Tabucchi's presentation of *rovesci* and multiplicity become noticeably darker as the decade progresses, suggesting that his texts dialogue not only with theoretical concerns but also with the changing socio-political climate.

The Joy of Play in *Il gioco del rovescio*

Notions of *rovescio* are present from Tabucchi's first novel, *Piazza d'Italia* (1975), in which the character Volturmo inverts the names of those closest to him,

²⁸ Page references are to the following editions: *Il gioco del rovescio*, 2nd edition (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2001); *Donna di Porto Pim e altre storie* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1996); *Piccoli equivoci senza importanza* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2001); *Notturmo indiano* (Palermo: Sellerio, 2002); *Il filo dell'orizzonte* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2002); *I volatili del Beato Angelico* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1998).

²⁹ *Requiem* was published in 1991 in Portuguese, and a translation into Italian by Sergio Vecchio was published by Feltrinelli in 1992. Page references are to the 2001 Feltrinelli edition.

³⁰ Flavia Brizio-Skov, *Antonio Tabucchi: Navigazioni in un arcipelago narrativo* (Cosenza: Pellegrini, 2002), p. 22. Brizio-Skov argues that these novels fit Brian McHale's definition of a postmodernist text by employing the ontological dominant, where the main set of questions raised by a work concerns notions relating to being, such as 'which world is this?', 'what is to be done in it?', 'which of my selves is to do it?' (Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, pp. 83-84). Other questions which McHale outlines include 'what is a world?', 'what kinds of worlds are there, how are they constituted, how do they differ?', 'what happens when different kinds of worlds are placed in confrontation or when boundaries between worlds are violated?' in his text *Postmodernist Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 10.

such as renaming Anita 'Atina' and Garibaldo 'Oldabirag'.³¹ However, the concept of *rovescio* shifts, and Anna Laura Lepschy rightly observes that, whereas the 'rovescio' in Tabucchi's first novel represents a rebellion against the world and an attempt to transform it, in *Il gioco* the 'rovescio' indicates an acknowledgement that things are very often the opposite of what they seem.³² Indeed, in his preface to the second edition of *Il gioco*, Tabucchi writes that the stories in the first edition, published in 1981, 'sono legati a una scoperta: l'essermi accorto un giorno, per le imprevedibili circostanze della vita, che una certa cosa che era "così" era invece anche in un altro modo'.³³ Far from representing a rebellion against the world, the *rovesci* in *Il gioco* constitute a celebration of multiplicity.

This possibility is embodied by the eponymous short story in the collection, which tells the story of Maria do Carmo. Maria do Carmo is convinced that the secret of life lies in a childhood game, where children stand in a circle with one child in the middle, who chooses a word and then asks a playmate to invert it, for example reversing 'mariposa' to 'asopiram' (*Il gioco*, p. 14). With time, the protagonist comes to accept Maria's view that this game resembles life, admitting that 'viviamo questa vita come se fosse un revés' (*Il gioco*, p. 17). The extent to which Maria do Carmo's life was governed by *rovescio* becomes clear when the protagonist learns of her death, significantly when he is standing in

³¹ Tabucchi, Antonio, *Piazza d'Italia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1993), p. 27. This is a reprint of the 1993 edition, which differs slightly from the 1975 original text.

³² Anna Laura Lepschy, 'Antonio Tabucchi: Splinters of Existence', in *The New Italian Novel*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Lino Pertile (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 200-218 (p. 203).

³³ *Il gioco*, p. 5. The second edition, which appeared in 1988, contained three new stories: 'Il gatto dello Cheshire', 'Vagabondaggio' and 'Una giornata a Olimpia'.

front of Velasquez's painting *Las Meninas*, which Maria do Carmo herself had nominated 'un gioco del rovescio', where 'la chiave del quadro sta nella figura di fondo' (*Il gioco*, p. 11). The protagonist travels to Portugal to see Maria's body and encounters her husband, who gives an account of his wife's life which represents the mirror image of Maria do Carmo's version of events. According to Maria do Carmo, her husband had rescued her from a life of poverty, for which she remained grateful and so stayed in a loveless marriage. She claimed to be involved in subversive political movements, which she encouraged the protagonist to join. Yet her husband's account is quite different:

lei ha conosciuto solo una finzione di Maria do Carmo [...] immagino cosa le avrà raccontato Maria do Carmo, una storia lacrimosa di un'infanzia infelice a New York, un padre repubblicano che è morto eroicamente nella Guerra civile spagnola, mi stia bene a sentire egregio signore, io non sono mai stato a New York in vita mia, Maria do Carmo è figlia di grandi proprietari, ha avuto un'infanzia dorata, quindici anni fa, quando l'ho conosciuta, aveva ventisette anni ed era la donna più corteggiata di Lisbona, io rientravo da una missione diplomatica in Spagna ed entrambi avevamo in comune l'amore per il nostro paese. (*Il gioco*, p. 21)

This story varies slightly from the version that the protagonist recounts Maria as telling, in which her father did not die and she lived in South America rather than New York, which, coupled with the husband's claim that she played many such games with others, offers many possible interpretations of how her life really was. Indeed, the reader cannot be sure that Maria is dead, as the protagonist may not see her body, and so the reader is left with the suspicion that Maria is merely beginning a new game. Maria leaves the protagonist a note, which simply says 'sever', which when inverted could mean either 'dreams' in French, or 'reverse' in Spanish. She leaves him with another game to play, guessing which of the

meanings she first thought of, as even if both may have relevance, one would have represented her main idea.

The protagonist has no way of knowing which meaning is the true one, either in her life story (and the life with which he has been involved, helping her supposed subversive activities) or in the note that she leaves him with. Monica Jansen argues that when faced with Maria's life story the protagonist has the choice of accepting what may be false or inverting what has already been inverted, all of which of course problematize the notion of a truth.³⁴ Yet the *rovescio*, the unclear communication in this text is a positive force, to be celebrated. In Maria do Carmo's initial account of her childhood, she spoke of running into the courtyard to play her *juego del revés* whilst her father cried and played old records on hearing that Franco's troops had taken Madrid (*Il gioco*, p. 14). The game, the play with words, functions as an escape. Certainly, later on there is a great deal of excitement in Maria's games for both her and the protagonist, where she is perhaps pretending to be a subversive whilst actually living as part of the Establishment. The multiplicity in the unknowns opens a world of possibility, where the instability in the meanings which language conveys is a positive force.³⁵

³⁴ Monica Jansen, 'Tabucchi: Molteplicità e rovescio', in *Piccole finzioni con importanza: Valori della narrativa italiana contemporanea (Convegno internazionale- maggio 1991, Università di Anversa, con la partecipazione di Antonio Tabucchi)*, ed. by Nathalie Roelens and Inge Lanslots (Ravenna: Longo, 1993), pp. 137-46 (p. 144).

³⁵ Pia Schwarz Lausten offers a new reading of 'Il gioco del rovescio', suggesting that Maria's hidden life is a means of underlining the divided nature of the subject and the constant search for an 'other': themes which Schwarz Lausten argues underpin all of Tabucchi's narrative. Pia Schwarz Lausten, *L'uomo inquieto: Identità e alterità nell'opera di Antonio Tabucchi* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2005), pp. 73-75.

These unknowns colour each of the stories in the collection. Flavia Brizio-Skov lists the questions that the text leaves unanswered: who is the protagonist Maria do Carmo in "Il gioco"? Why is the protagonist of "Lettere a Casablanca" in hospital? What were the tragic events of his childhood? Who is the man on the bicycle who appears every Saturday in "I pomeriggi del sabato"? Why did the English actor in "Teatro" hide himself away in Mozambique? What prompted the protagonist of "Il piccolo Gatsby" to abandon his wife and villa one night? Why does the loving and affectionate boy in "Dolores Ibarruri versa lacrime amara" transform himself into a terrorist? What do the characters in "Paradiso celeste" want to sell in Africa? Why does the protagonist of "Voci" run home for an imaginary appointment?³⁶ Brizio-Skov argues that in all of these, 'il rovescio è appunto la possibilità di soluzioni multiple, giacché la realtà è come appare, ma anche diversa, molteplice, sorprendente e inafferrabile' (Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, p. 87). The stories do not transmit one truth, but rather multiple truths, multiple possibilities. They reflect the belief that there is not one truth in real life, any more than there is in literature. In an interview with Anna Botta in *Contemporary Literature*, Tabucchi states that:

the game of backwards rests on the suspicion that there exists in reality another side of the coin; that reality shows one aspect which is immediately knowable whilst hiding another aspect, which, though perhaps the truer, remains in shadow. *Il gioco del rovescio* is the attempt to explore this zone of shadow, to look around the corner.³⁷

Tabucchi's observation that whichever meaning that we choose, the other is always implied, ties in closely with Derrida's notion of the trace. Thus, whichever

³⁶ Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, pp. 86-87. The stories also leave other, minor, questions unanswered.

³⁷ Anna Botta, 'An Interview with Antonio Tabucchi Conducted by Anna Botta' in *Contemporary Literature*, 35, no. 1 (Spring 1994), 421-40 (p. 424).

meaning we choose for Maria do Carmo's 'sever', the other is implied in its absence. *Il gioco* is infused with a sense of joy, a celebration of the possibility of interpreting things in different ways, of not being bound by a single truth and recalls Barthes' joy in 'The Death of the Author', as he faces the possibility of free play and interpretation.

Growing Doubts: *Donna di Porto Pim* and *Notturmo indiano*

Multiplicity is also celebrated in *Donna* (1983) and *Notturmo* (1984), yet both also begin to problematize the notion of the limits of communication. Multiplicity in *Donna* takes the form of differing viewpoints, epitomised in the short story 'Una balena vede gli uomini'. This brief description of men seen through the eyes of a whale reminds the reader of the importance of perspective and viewpoint, of the possibility of imposing a different meaning on events if they are given a different meaning or a given a different reception by the recipient. Tabucchi tells us in the prologue that the text was born from his 'vecchio vizio di spiare le cose dall'altra parte' and then reiterates the fact later on, stressing that 'tutte le storie sono banali, l'importante è il punto di vista'.³⁸

Written and verbal (or rather sonic) communications are fleetingly problematized in *Donna*. This occurs firstly in the image of the rather forlorn message board in Peter's bar, a pub in the Azores, where travellers leave messages in the remote hope that someone will read them and respond. These 'messaggi precari' lie waiting to be reclaimed in a deserted landscape, signalling the precarity of communication (*Donna*, p. 38). This fragility is reiterated as

³⁸ *Donna*, p.13; p. 26.

Tabucchi notes that 'ora che i mari sono pieni di rumori meccanici e di ultrasuoni artificiali, i messaggi fra le balene sono troppo disturbati perché esse possano afferrarli e decifrarli' (*Donna*, p. 50). Communication is disturbed by outside forces.

The plurality in *Notturmo* is more complex and addresses multiplicity of meaning. The last chapter appears to undermine all that the reader has thus far understood in the novel, although even the new perspective is itself far from definite and offers multiple interpretations. The text initially appears to recount the protagonist Roux's search for his missing friend Xavier Janata Pinto across India. Beginning from a letter sent by Vimala Sar, a prostitute who knew Xavier and was concerned by his disappearance, the protagonist visits Bombay hospital and the Theosophical Society at Madras in search of his friend, finally finding him in the Oberoi, a luxurious hotel in Goa, and then at the last moment realizing that perhaps he does not truly want to find his friend. Yet this account is undermined by a conversation between the protagonist and a photographer in the dining room of the Oberoi in the final chapter, where the protagonist proposes a theoretical novel, which in fact inverts the story which the reader has just read, so that the protagonist is the one being looked for and does not want to be found; a point which his friend finally realizes. There are at least two possible meanings in the text: either the story that we have just read is the true one or, as Laura Lepschy claims, the reverse story is the true one (Lepschy, 'Splinters of Existence', p. 207). Brizio-Skov has identified even more possible readings, including the possibility of a detective searching for somebody and someone

searching for himself (Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, p. 95). Any of these readings could be substantiated, in part because the text favours multiple readings by offering so little information about the protagonist. As Tabucchi notes in his interview with Botta, the character is wholly mysterious: 'on the first page he's just somebody who stepped off a plane in India; we know nothing else about him. He's completely out of context'.³⁹ Whilst there is not the same joy in the multiplicity as in *Il gioco*, it is by no means negative. The reader is left with a realization of multiplicity of meaning and invited to create her own meaning.

The negativity in the text appears through the inability to communicate meaning through visual means. The first instance of this is quite amusing, but is re-contextualized by the second instance. The protagonist decides to spend his first night in India in the *Quartiere delle Gabbia*, a miserable, poverty-ridden area that he had seen depicted in photographs. However these pictures prove woefully inadequate in communicating the true horror of the locality:

lo conoscevo attraverso certe fotografie di un fotografo celebre e pensavo di essere preparato alla miseria umana, ma le fotografie chiudono il visibile in un rettangolo. Il visibile senza cornice è sempre un'altra cosa. E poi, quel visibile aveva un odore troppo forte. Anzi, molti odori. (*Notturmo*, p. 15)

The limits of visual communication are reinforced at the end of the text, as the protagonist talks to a young photographer. She shows him some of her work, in particular a photograph of a young black man running with his arms held aloft, as if winning a sprint. She then shows him a larger version of the photograph, which also encapsulates a policeman shooting the young man as he runs away. This

³⁹ Botta, 'An Interview with Antonio Tabucchi', p. 426. Tabucchi contrasts the presentation of Roux with Spino, who is situated very definitely in a context with a home, workplace, regular haunts and a girlfriend.

photograph embodies her warning to 'méfiez-vous des morceaux choisis' (*Notturmo*, p. 102). The inability to communicate meaning in this instance is far more sinister than the multiplicity of meanings in the main story, where any of the versions (the protagonist searching for a friend, for himself, being sought) are interesting and innocuous. The photographs are darker as they mask extreme poverty and racial hatred.

In both texts, the process of communication is disturbed and manipulated by outside forces. This is deliberate in the case of *Notturmo*, where the photographers knowingly omit and present information in order to communicate a certain idea. In *Donna*, the communication is unknowingly disturbed, lost in a sea of other noises and messages which distort genuine attempts at communication between less powerful individuals, embodied by the bereft souls in Pete's bar and by the whales which are being hunted to extinction. This new problematization of multiplicity and communication seems to engage with the changing political climate of the 1980s, brought about by the mutual distrust between the members of the ruling *pentapartito*: the Christian Democrats; Socialists; Social Democrats; Liberals; and Radicals. Paul Ginsborg suggests that this lack of trust led to an enormous growth in the process of *lottizzazione*, in which government jobs were traded for the ability to deliver votes during an election.⁴⁰ This had a particular impact on communication as the newly burgeoning RAI television channels were divided between the parties which were then able to present information as they chose. The increase in patronage in the

⁴⁰ Paul Ginsborg, *L'Italia del tempo presente: Famiglia, società civile, stato 1980-1996* (Turin: Einaudi, 1998), p. 266.

ever-growing field of media communication served to develop the notion that information presented to the public represented 'morceaux choisis' in the wake of the P2 revelations of 1981, and of course the Moro affair three years earlier.⁴¹

Anxiety and Despair in *Piccoli equivoci*, *Il filo* and *I volatili*

The seeds of anxiety in *Donna* and *Notturmo* are developed in *Piccoli equivoci senza importanza* (1985), *Il filo dell'orizzonte* (1986) and *I volatili del Beato Angelico* (1987). Tabucchi's description of these *equivoci* in the opening 'nota' sets the tone for their negative and destructive nature in the body of *Piccoli equivoci*:

anch'io parlo di equivoci, ma non credo di amarli; sono portato piuttosto a *reperirli*. Malintesi, incertezze, comprensioni tardive, inutili rimpianti, ricordi forse ingannevoli, errori sciocchi e irremediabili: le cose fuori luogo esercitano su di me un'attrazione irresistibile, quasi fosse una vocazione, una sorte di povera stimmate priva di sublime. (*Piccoli equivoci*, p. 7)

The *equivoci* pervade the stories, yet in a destructive way, with eight of the eleven stories involving death on some level, ranging from assassination to suicide to terrorism.

⁴¹ Stephen Gundle observes that whilst *lottizzazione* was not new in the 1980s, it became much more visible during this decade as the Christian Democrats became weaker and other parties sought to strengthen their position, in his chapter 'The Rise and Fall of Craxi's Socialist Party', in *The New Italian Republic: From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to Berlusconi*, ed. by Stephen Gundle and Stephen Parker (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 85-97 (pp. 92-3). For an analysis of *lottizzazione* and of the *pentapartito* system, see Paul Ginsborg, *Italy and its Discontents: Family, Civil Society and State 1980-2000* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 137-42; Matt Frei, *Italy: The Unfinished Revolution* (London: Mandarin, 1996), pp. 55-66; Kogan, *A Political History*, pp. 278-80. Paul Ginsborg outlines the P2 revelations, in which members of parliament (including 41 members of the *pentapartito*), heads of the secret services, armed forces and business leaders were found to be members of the nefarious Masonic lodge linked to attempts to subvert democracy and implement terrorism, in *L'Italia del tempo presente*, pp. 269-76.

The title story examines the trial of a terrorist, who is to be tried by a judge who is a friend from university, also involved in the protest movement in the early years. The *equivoco* lies in how the judge enrolled to read classics and was enrolled in law through a clerical error. The clerk's response, that it was 'un piccolo equivoco senza rimedio' becomes a motto for the students, and indeed for the text (*Piccoli equivoci*, p. 11). This miscommunication leads to one friend acting as a judge in the terrorism trial of a former class-mate, re-enacting Sophocles' *Antigone*, which they had once performed together. The evocation of this play, along with the charge of terrorism itself ensures that the spectre of death hangs heavily over the story and the *equivoco*. Similarly, in the second story in the collection, the multiplicities presented are all linked to death. In 'Aspettando l'inverno', the widow of a celebrated writer inexplicably destroys her late husband's manuscripts after the funeral. There are many possible explanations, ranging from resentment at living in her husband's shadow (or indeed resentment towards her husband for any number of possible sins he may have committed), to the desire to keep material which may be harmful from being published. The multiplicity is not joyful but sombre, tinged with the death of the writer and the death of the books. This link between multiple possibilities, miscommunication and death is maintained throughout the collection.⁴²

⁴² 'Rebus' recounts the exploits of a mechanic who restores a Bugatti and then survives a mysterious murder attempt in Biarritz; 'Gli incanti' narrates a young girl's attempts to murder her step-father using voodoo (a much more sinister 'game' than that employed by Maria do Carmo) and encompasses various mysteries, such as whether the girl's stepfather denounced her father to the Nazis and why her mother commits suicide; in 'Stanza' a woman helps her brother to commit suicide; in 'Isole' a prison guard posts a letter for an inmate who is going to hospital to die; 'I treni che vanno a Madras' sees a former inmate of a concentration camp assassinate one of the scientists from the camp; 'Cinema' recounts a re-make of an old film about partisans, one of whom faces death at the end.

The negativity of *Piccoli equivoci* centres on the possible meanings with which the reader is presented. The pessimism of *Il filo* on the other hand is rooted in the possibility of creating meaning from signs. In the text, the protagonist Spino attempts to discover the identity of the unknown corpse brought into his mortuary following a police raid. He uses a series of clues which become increasingly unlikely and tenuous, with the reader forced to question the validity of the connections that Spino makes. The first links seem reasonable, as after a conversation with a priest who knew the dead man, the priest produces a letter, and a photograph from the dead man's past. Spino then traces the tailor who made the coat worn by the victim, and through the tailor's records traces the man who bought it (Faldini), who seems to have been the employer of the man's father or uncle. This encounter leads him to meet a woman who may have been the dead man's governess when he was a child (though both the woman and Faldini express doubt that the figures in the photograph correspond to the people whom they knew).

Later links become ever more improbable, as Spino sees clues in what appear to be random and unconnected events, epitomized by his belief that a seagull is spying on him. An enigmatic encounter with the pianist Peppe Harpo leads Spino to a café, where the waitress' advice that he visit a herbalist for some shampoo is taken as a hidden message, as is the label on the shampoo itself which leads to Spino awaiting an encounter in the graveyard. Here, an inscription on the tomb leads him to conclude that he must meet somebody at the port at the dead of night.

Spino firmly believes that these are hidden messages. The connections seem far-fetched, but Spino believes in their validity. As the text unfolds the reader is reminded of a text which the priest keeps in his office. The priest tells Spino that 'solo Dio conosce tutte le combinazioni dell'esistenza, ma solo a noi spetta di scegliere la nostra combinazione fra tutte quelle possibili', indicating the subjectivity of links.⁴³ This sentiment is echoed at the end of the text when Spino thinks that 'c'è un ordine delle cose e che niente succede per caso; e il caso è proprio questo: la nostra impossibilità di cogliere i veri nessi delle cose che sono' (*Il filo*, p. 98). The text hesitates between Spino's conviction that the links do exist and our notion that the signs are arbitrary and do not point to meaning. In a later interview Tabucchi states that Spino invents the signs in order to attempt to explain the universe:

Spino tries to decipher the world according to ritualistic formulas of strange geometries that he constructs for himself and that he uses to try to figure out reality. Thus he finds almost symbolic correspondences that he himself invents, that are artificial, because reality is mysterious for him [...] Spino proceeds tentatively through life trying to understand, to construct strange correspondences and geometries that are completely implausible and belong only to his own fantasy. The seagull is one of these elements. (Botta, 'An Interview with Antonio Tabucchi', pp. 426-27)

Spino cannot find meaning in the signs around him and so invents his own meaning in the signs, which, as Brizio-Skov succinctly puts it, 'si sottraggono ad ogni logica' (Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, p. 98).

The anxiety regarding the possibility of communicating meaning through signs is epitomised in *I volatili*. Tabucchi states that:

⁴³ *Il filo*, p. 47. Charles Klopp identifies the priest's text as Calvino's *Il castello dei destini incrociati* in his article 'Aporias and Intertextuality in Antonio Tabucchi's *Il filo dell'orizzonte*', *Italica*, 75, 3 (1998), 428-40 (p. 431).

I volatili del Beato Angelico represents a very difficult period. I published precisely as an exorcism, because I wanted to exit that period of difficult relationships with existence and with all that existence was furnishing me. More than involution, I'd say incommunicability. At a certain point, the channel between me and that which surrounded me was interrupted: I was no longer communicating with external things and external things weren't able to communicate with me. (Botta, 'An Interview with Antonio Tabucchi', p. 437)

Communication is in fact the fulcrum of the text, which emphasizes the failure of verbal communication. This breakdown is epitomized in the story 'La traduzione' in which the protagonist describes an impressionist painting to a blind person. The description is fittingly based more on the protagonist's impressions, on his interpretation of the painting, than on a description of colours and objects in the painting. Thus, as well as describing the action of the painting, of a woman crossing a bridge, the protagonist hypothesizes that the bridge is about to break, about to snap shut as Meccano bridges built by a child might. He identifies a figure in the background as a peasant who, unlike the woman, may be thinking about the land, or as a veterinary surgeon thinking about an ill cow in a farm which must be nearby. There is clearly a mediation in the description between what the artist painted and the what the protagonist sees, before the image is communicated to the blind person. The limits of verbal communication are stressed, perhaps with the protagonist's description as a metaphor for language itself.

The collection of imaginary letters in the text span time and space. Don Sebastian de Aviz (1554-1578) writes to Goya (1746-1828) to describe the way in which he would like to be painted, whilst Napoleon's fortune teller writes to Dolores Ibarruri (*La pasionaria* of the Spanish Civil War) to predict Dolores' life

story. These letters seem to emphasize the impossibility of communicating by letter, forcing the reader to re-evaluate the extent to which the sender is truly able to communicate meaning to the recipient. Indeed, there is precious little communication in the other letters of the text. 'La frase che segue è falsa. La frase che precede è vera', whose very title addresses issues of communication, comprises an exchange of letters between a character Antonio Tabucchi and Xavier Janata Monroy, on whom Tabucchi claims a character in his *Notturmo indiano* is based. As Xavier continues to maintain in his letters a reading of *Notturmo*, which Tabucchi refutes several times, the text problematizes the writer's ability to communicate his ideas, underlining the way language takes on a meaning of its own. Even communicating with oneself is problematic, as 'Gli archivi di Macao' illustrates, where the protagonist writes letters to his dead father, aware that in doing so he seeks only to communicate with himself. This awareness underlines how we realize that even communication with ourselves is problematic and requires an outside form.

The only successful communication in the text is non-verbal and fantastical. In the title story, Fra Giovanni da Fiesole is visited by three winged creatures, the first of whom lands in his onion patch at the monastery. These creatures (visible only to the monk) establish a strange kind of non-verbal communication with him, an alphabet of movements which he is able to understand without quite knowing how or why he can understand them. Some of the movements are quite straightforward, such as when the creature 'fece cenno

di no con la testa', or when it 'mosse la testa in cenno affermativo'.⁴⁴ Others however are less immediately clear, and Fra Giovanni himself is amazed at how he can understand:

il volatile lo guardò con quegli occhi grandi, umidi, poi chiuse le palpebre e dimenò alcune penne delle ali, una penna gialla, una verde e due azzurre, queste ultime tre volte, in rapida successione. Fra Giovanni capì e ripeté sillibando, come di chi impara un alfabeto: "hai fatto un viaggio troppo lungo". E poi domandò: "perché capisco quello che dici?". La creatura allargò le zampe quanto la posizione glielo consentiva, come a significare che non aveva la più pallida idea; e allora Fra Giovanni concluse: 'si vede che ti capisco perché ti capisco'. (*I volatili*, p. 13)

The word 'alphabet' is repeated later on, reiterating how this non-verbal communication replaces speech (*I volatili*, p. 15). Through the various signs, the creatures communicate to the monk that they want to be kept outside, as they are frightened of enclosed spaces, and then with 'un fruscio d'ali' tell him that they want him to depict them in his frescoes (*I volatili*, p. 20). Once this has been completed, they leave. Like the imaginary messages sent out and received in a lighthouse in 'Storia di una storia che non c'è', these non-verbal communications may be understood.⁴⁵

Through his *giochi* and *rovesci*, Tabucchi is able to communicate not only with notions of the sign, but also with the concerns of the 1980s. The engagement

⁴⁴ *I volatili*, p. 12 and p. 13.

⁴⁵ The positivity of Tabucchi's depiction of such non-verbal communication becomes even more striking when compared to a similar instance in his second novel, *Il piccolo naviglio*, first published in 1978. Page references to *Il piccolo naviglio* are to the 1999 translation, *Le petit navire*, trans. by Lise Chapuis (Paris: Christian Bourgois Éditeur, 1999), since Tabucchi expresses a preference for this version in the preface to the French edition. The text recounts a friendship between Leonida-Leonido and a crane, which signals the beginning of Leonido-Leonida's descent into madness. In the text, 'les deux amis trouvèrent un langage commun qui n'était ni la parole humaine ni la langue ornithologique, mais un système de signes de communication, au-delà de l'entendement humain, que par commodité et convention les hommes définissent sous le nom de la folie' (*Le petit navire*, p. 35). The connotations of the non-verbal communications between man and flying creature come to signify a valid means of communication in *I volatili*, as opposed to a descent into madness.

is subtle, representing a growing concern with the possibility of communicating and understanding truths about the contemporary world in which information is increasingly controlled and manipulated. Tabucchi's texts take a noticeably darker view as the 1980s progress, with the increasing politicization of RAI and with the growth of private media ownership, embodied by the omnipresent Berlusconi and his political allies.⁴⁶ In addition to broadcasting to almost half of the nation's viewers by the end of the 1980s, following Craxi's special decree legitimising Berlusconi's holdings in 1984, Berlusconi also owned Mondadori publishing house, controlling twenty-five per cent of copyright on Italian authors, and Publitalia, controlling sixty per cent of advertising.⁴⁷ Tabucchi's texts belie anxiety that the signs which the reader is able to grasp and interpret denote a partial, manipulated reality, which (often deliberately) distorts the truth.

Some conclusions

The questioning of the existence of truth and recognition of the instability of language, issues which should problematize the notion of socio-political engagement, become vehicles through which Sciascia and Tabucchi ask questions of their contemporary reality. Using very different means, both writers promote scepticism as a way of interpreting society. Sciascia uses rational investigation as a means of establishing an often hidden truth, drawing briefly on non-rational means of enquiry when required but reverting to Enlightenment methodology as

⁴⁶ Craxi's political protection of Berlusconi is detailed in Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1987-1995* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 406.

⁴⁷ Berlusconi's media interests are coupled with his vast business empire, ranging from construction companies to supermarkets. See Matt Frei, *Italy: Unfinished Revolution*, pp. 214-63.

the ultimate tool in uncovering truth. Sciascia continues to believe in the existence of truth, which in some respects perhaps makes him anachronistic in a world informed by the scepticism of post-structuralism. However, Sciascia's methodology of questioning the official version of events and of highlighting ambiguities and flaws is in fact closely related to Tabucchi's later presentation of multiplicity. Both seek to illustrate the dangers inherent in edited, controlled information, which distorts and manipulates truths. Sciascia's engagement is certainly more closely linked to specific events than Tabucchi's dialogue with the fraught notion of communication, although Tabucchi's 1997 assertion that the role of the intellectual is to seek to 'percorrere il discorso al rovescio con una logica che non ubbidisce a una sequenza conformista della realtà' is perhaps not so far from Sciascia's argument some fifteen years previous that 'lo scetticismo è salutare. È il migliore antidoto per il fanatismo. [...] Lo scetticismo io lo vedo, dunque, come la valvola di sicurezza della ragione'.⁴⁸ Tabucchi and Sciascia take very different paths, through the differing worlds of logical investigation and fantasy, yet arrive at a similar destination, dialoguing with both literary concerns and the world in which they live.

⁴⁸ Antonio Tabucchi, *La gastrite di Platone* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1998), p. 28, and Marcelle Padovani and Leonardo Sciascia, *La Sicilia come metafora: Intervista di Marcelle Padovani* (Milan: Mondadori, 1979), p. 6.

Part 4:

The Challenges of Intertextuality and Self-Reflexivity

4.1 Dialogue and Commitment

Writers' dialogue with literary heritage has long been a fraught and problematic discourse. As far back as the fifteenth century, Leon Battista Alberti explored the impossible task facing modern authors: to write something new without repeating, intentionally or otherwise, work from the literary canon. He concluded that an author could aim only to create a new and interesting mosaic from the ideas and the writings of the past. Alberti writes that:

e veggonsi queste cose litterarie usurpate da tanti, e in tanti loro scritti adoperate e disseminate, che oggi a chi vogli ragionarne resta altro nulla che solo el raccogliere e assortirle e poi accoppiarle insieme con qualche varietà dagli altri e adattezza dell'opera sua, quasi suo istituto sia imitare in questo che altrove fece al pavimento.¹

The work of the (post)structuralists in the late 1960s and 1970s opened the way for a re-examination of this tense relationship with literary tradition and its implications for writers. In his 1968 essay, 'The Death of the Author', Roland Barthes writes that:

we now know the text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.²

From the 1970s onwards then, writers were forced to consider whether their texts could clearly communicate with the reader, or were simply communicating with other texts within the canon. This concern is expressed both by Michel Foucault

¹ Cited in Martin McLaughlin, 'Poliziano's *Stanze per la giostra*: Postmodern Poetics in a Proto-Renaissance Poem', in *Italy in Crisis: 1494*, ed. by Jane Everson and Diego Zancani (Oxford: Legenda, 2000), pp. 129-51 (p. 143).

² Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 142-48 (p. 146).

in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and by Umberto Eco in his *Postille to Il nome della rosa*. Foucault argues that:

the frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network.³

Eco, meanwhile, makes a similar observation, but from the point of view of the practicing writer rather than the theoretician. Eco explains that whilst writing *Il nome della rosa* 'ho scoperto [...] ciò che gli scrittori hanno sempre saputo (e che tante volte ci hanno detto): i libri parlano sempre di altri libri e ogni storia racconta una storia già raccontata'.⁴

Clearly, the concept of intertextuality, of texts dialoguing with each other rather than offering a vehicle for communication between the writer and the reader, problematizes the notion of socially committed literature. The focus on intertextuality and self-reflexivity, which concentrate on the world of literature, seems to exclude the possibility of using literature to communicate ideas and beliefs about socio-political concerns. If books relate only to each other, then what value can the practice of reading have in developing the reader's understanding of the society she inhabits? In the following two chapters, I will explore the methods which Sciascia and Tabucchi employ to address these challenges, and will chart the changing attitudes which they adopt towards

³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A.M. Sheridan Smith (Bristol: Tavistock, 1978), p. 23.

⁴ Umberto Eco, *Il nome della rosa* (Milan: Bompiani, 2000), p. 513. 'Postille a *Il nome della rosa*' first appeared in *Alfabeta*, 49 (June 1983).

intertextuality and self-reflexivity. I will then contextualize these shifts in light of the changing socio-political climate.

The chapter on Sciascia will firstly analyse dialogue with selected authors in his writings and interrogate whether these dialogues hamper or further his engagement with contemporary issues. The chapter will examine Sciascia's presentation of the practice of reading and its potential value in understanding the world and in suggesting models of behaviour therein. Intertextuality in Sciascia's texts extends to dialogue between his individual works, and the chapter will explore whether such dialogue permits engagement with the issues of the time, or excludes such debates in favour of literary self-reflexivity. Finally, the chapter will chart the presence of dialogue within individual texts and will investigate if any shifts may engage with contemporary changes in the socio-political climate.

Whereas Sciascia challenges the notion that texts speak primarily to each other, Tabucchi embraces it wholeheartedly. The chapter on Tabucchi's dialogue with the canon will explore the ways in which Tabucchi's self-reflexivity and intertextuality actively engage with contemporary issues, rather than ignore them. Interestingly, the conclusions that Tabucchi and Sciascia arrive at are surprisingly similar, despite their very different methodologies. The chapter will also address Tabucchi's insistence on the importance of literature as a vehicle for dialogue, and the dangers inherent in silence.

Sciascia and Tabucchi gravitate towards two common sources in their dialogue with the canon: Pirandello and the French literary tradition. French literature comes to embody the concepts of literary freedom, justice and reason

for both writers; an anchor holding fast against an unjust and an irrational world. In Sciascia's texts, this tradition counters the modernist consciousness and awareness of multiple selves, as articulated by Pirandello, although for Tabucchi, the divided subject is represented as much by Pessoa as by Pirandello.⁵ Although both Sciascia and Tabucchi draw on the modernist consciousness, the extent to which they view it as a positive force differs. Nonetheless, dialogue with both the French tradition and modernism, along with dialogue with individual points of interest, provide Sciascia and Tabucchi with a valuable means of engaging with society.

⁵ Pia Schwarz Lausten traces the development of the divided subject through modernism and postmodernism in *L'uomo inquieto: Identità e alterità nell'opera di Antonio Tabucchi* (Copenhagen, Museum Tusculanum Press, 2005), pp. 15–47. She later considers whether Pessoa or Pirandello was the first to problematize the notion of the self, concluding that Pirandello and Freud developed the concept before Pessoa (Schwarz Lausten, *L'uomo inquieto*, p. 88).

4.2. Dialogue and Intertextuality in Sciascia

Just as Alberti conceptualized the process of writing as the construction of mosaics from past texts, so Farrell describes Sciascia's writings as 'a mosaic of quotes and references from the writers he admired'.¹ Giudice, meanwhile, writes of Sciascia that 'il suo è un universo di citazioni di vario livello, dirette e indirette, coperte e scoperte, semplici e molteplici'.² Sciascia was certainly aware that the influence of other texts could problematize the writing process, and in an interview with Claude Ambroise asserted that 'non è possibile scrivere: si riscrive'.³ This process functioned both consciously and sub-consciously for Sciascia; in *Ore di Spagna* it is through the process of writing about Stendhal that Sciascia realizes that the name of his character Amar in *Il contesto* was inspired by Stendhal's *Henri Brulard*.⁴ On a theoretical level, Sciascia illustrates his awareness of how stories are re-written and revised in his essay 'Il calzolaio di Messina', where Sciascia traces the re-writing of the same core story in Labat's *Voyages en Espagne*, Diderot's *Entretien d'un père avec ses enfants*, Gozzi's *Saggio di versi faceti* and De Stefani's *Il calzolaio di Messina (Fatti diversi di storia letteraria e civile, III, pp. 557-571)*.

If Sciascia was re-writing texts which he had read and which had influenced him, then he certainly had a great deal of material to draw upon. Sciascia had a library of between 15,000 and 20,000 books, and was well read in

¹ Joseph Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 1995), p. 54.

² Gaspare Giudice, *Lo stemma di Racalmuto* (Rome: L'ancora del Mediterraneo, 1999), p. 103.

³ Claude Ambroise, '14 domande a Leonardo Sciascia', in *I*, pp. xv-xxiii (p. xvi).

⁴ Leonardo Sciascia, *Ore di Spagna* (Milan: Bompiani, 2000), p. 71.

both Italian and in foreign literature.⁵ Sciascia nominates Stendhal, Verga, De Roberto, Tolstoy, Manzoni, Casanova, Vittorini, Voltaire, Borges, Diderot, Montaigne, Pascal, the writers of *La Ronda* and Pirandello as the writers who influenced him most.⁶ This list is both wide-ranging and potentially contradictory, and lends itself to vast and sweeping generalizations, which posit that Sciascia's work resounds with the echoes of any number of authors from the list. The purpose of this chapter is not to exhaustively catalogue Sciascia's critical treatment of all of these writers, nor to comprehensively examine the ways in which characters, themes and direct citations in his fiction echo literary influences. This chapter will instead focus on the way in which Sciascia uses dialogue between texts (both those of others and his own) and within texts to explore the extent to which literature may offer engagement with contemporary issues. Analysis of Sciascia's dialogue with other writers will be confined to a study of interplay with Voltaire, Stendhal, Manzoni and Pirandello, both for obvious reasons of space, and also since dialogue with these writers addresses the central concern of the possibility of engagement with society.⁷

⁵ Sciascia estimated the size of his library in an interview with *Le monde* in December 1978, which is reproduced in Valter Vecellio and Leonardo Sciascia, *La palma va a nord* (Milan: Gammalibri, 1982), p.130.

⁶ See Vecellio, *La palma va a nord*, pp. 99-101; Marcelle Padovani and Leonardo Sciascia, *La Sicilia come metafora: Intervista di Marcelle Padovani* (Mondadori, 1979), pp. 10 & 77, Davide Lajolo, *Conversazione in una stanza chiusa* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 1981), pp. 37 & 63.

⁷ Sciascia's critical analysis of writers may be found in *Alfabeto pirandelliano*, in III, pp. 467-513; *Cronachette*, in III, pp. 107-163; *Cruciverba*, in II, pp. 965-1282, *Fatti diversi di storia letteraria e civile*, in III, pp. 515-727; *La corda pazzo*, in I, pp. 959-1222; *Per un ritratto dello scrittore da giovane*, in III, pp. 165-98; *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, in III, pp. 1141-1202 and *Pirandello e pirandellismo*, in III, pp. 999-1039. Sciascia makes some interesting (and little quoted) remarks about the representation of love and eroticism in Verga, Stendhal and Petrarch, in Leonardo Sciascia and Domenico Porzio, *Fuoco all'anima: Conversazione con Domenico Porzio* (Milan: Mondadori, 1992). Massimo Onofri details the early literary influences on Sciascia in *Storia di Sciascia* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1994), pp. 4-24. Analysis of echoes of Pirandello's and Brancati's work may be found in Onofrio Lo Dico, *Leonardo Sciascia: Tecniche narrative e ideologia*

Classical discourse?

In *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, Sciascia defines Montaigne as 'l'uomo classico' (III, p. 1168). Throughout his *Essais*, Montaigne peppers his writings with quotes from classical writers, citing them as unquestionable sources of truth or knowledge.⁸ Montaigne does not suggest the quotations as a starting point for debate, to be unpacked and problematized, but rather as a clear enunciation of a certain idea or moral or ethical stance. Sciascia adopts this approach when it comes to citations in the epigraphs to his work. All of Sciascia's texts, with the exception of *Candido*, are graced by at least one epigraph, and perhaps the entire text of *Candido* functions as *Candido*'s epigraph.⁹ These epigraphs represent precisely the writings of the 'uomo classico', as Sciascia made clear in a 1978 interview with *La Sicilia*. Sciascia explained that 'comincio sempre i miei lavori con una frase emblematica che è un po' un simbolo-guida di quello che voglio scrivere', and indeed the epigraphs give the reader a good idea of the key concepts to be found in the work.¹⁰ An illustrative example of this classical quotation is found in the epigraph to the 1987 text *Porte aperte* (III, pp. 325-401). The epigraph is drawn from Salvatore Satta's *Soliloqui e colloqui di un giurista*, and prepares the reader for the main themes which will emerge in Sciascia's text. Sciascia quotes:

(Caltanissetta-Rome: Salvatore Sciascia, 1988), pp. 71-85. Rosario Castelli's edited volume *Leonardo Sciascia e la tradizione dei siciliani: Atti del convegno di studi, Racalmuto, 21 e 22 novembre 1998* (Caltanissetta: Salvatore Sciascia, 2000) contains articles on the influence of Pirandello, Verga, Borgese and Vittorini. Massimo Onofri focuses on the influence of Brancati, Vittorini, Lampedusa and Borgese in *Nel nome dei padri: Nuovi studi sciasciani* (Milan: La vita felice, 2000), whilst Claude Ambroise's *Invito alla lettura di Sciascia* (Milan: Mursia, 1974) analyses the Brancatani elements of Sciascia's early texts. Giudice considers the opposing influences of Borges and Borgese on Sciascia (*Lo Stemma*, pp. 103-23).

⁸ Michel de Montaigne, *Essais I*, ed. by Pierre Michel and preface by André Gide (Paris: Gallimard, 1965).

⁹ Voltaire, *Candido* (Paris: Larousse, 1998).

¹⁰ The interview with *La Sicilia* is quoted in Vecellio, *La palma va a nord*, p. 60.

la realtà è che chi uccide non è il legislatore ma il giudice, non è il provvedimento legislativo ma il provvedimento giurisdizionale. Onde il processo si pone con una sua autonomia di fronte alla legge e al comando, un'autonomia nella quale e per la quale il comando, come atto arbitrario di imperio, si dissolve, e imponendosi tanto al comandato quanto a colui che ha formulato il comando trova, al di fuori di ogni contenuto rivoluzionario, il suo 'momento eterno'. (*Porte aperte*, III, p. 327)

This citation prepares the reader for the tale of the moral dilemma of the 'piccolo giudice' who, under the fascist penal code, is expected to confer the death penalty upon a defendant known to have killed three people: his wife; his former employer; and the man who replaced him at work. The story recounts the event which is 'il punto d'onore della mia vita, dell'onore di vivere', as set up by the epigraph (*Porte aperte*, III, p. 395). Sciascia's citation indicates that literature holds a truth outside the context in which it is written. On one level, this citation aids understanding of another literary text, so has another meaning within literature, but on another level it has a perennial value which can be applied to society. The 'momento eterno' of the judge represents any ethical or moral dilemma that the reader must face, and literature may offer guidance.

Sciascia's notion of using a citation as a source of truth is not confined to quoting the words of a writer, but may also encompass evoking the spectre of a writer's world vision by mentioning his name within a text (Sciascia's list of preferred writers does not include any women). As Sciascia writes in *Porte aperte*, 'il nome di uno scrittore, il titolo di un libro, possono a volte, e per alcuni, suonare come quello di una Patria' (*Porte aperte*, III, p. 366). Sciascia certainly counts himself amongst those able to ground their ideas in the homeland of the 'pagine amate' of a writer, and expects his readers to be able to do the same

(*Porte aperte*, III, p. 454). Sciascia establishes the importance of his writers both through direct statements and through repeating key episodes from their life, works or reception.

The Significance of Writers and the Practice of Reading

In the case of Voltaire, Sciascia's process of identifying the writer's significance is very straightforward: he simply tells the reader, both in his fiction and in his *saggistica*, that Voltaire is the embodiment of Enlightenment thinking, 'la chiave della scrittura', where *Candide* and *Traité sur la tolerance* (along with Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene*) are 'al centro del secolo, come un sole al zenit' in a century which began to grasp the idea 'che i deboli fossero buoni, le guerre stupide, le "atti di fede" mostruosi, le giustizie feudali ingiuste, e che alla dura fatica dovesse corrispondere il godimento del frutto'.¹¹ Voltaire then represents the championing of the weak, reason rather than patriotism or religion, social justice and an enjoyment of hard-earned pleasure. Voltaire's centrality is emphasized by his appearance in fictional texts, not just where his ideas are discussed (such as the discussion of *Traité sur la tolerance* in *Il contesto*) but also where characters assert his worth.¹² Di Blasi for instance, in *Il Consiglio d'Egitto*, proclaims that 'il fatto è che Voltaire ti serve di più, oggi, ma forse Voltaire serve sempre di più'.¹³ When Voltaire is mentioned, Sciascia is asserting the truth that

¹¹ Sciascia's words appear in Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, p. 57; and in *Cruciverba*, II, p. 1012.

¹² *Il contesto* appears in II, pp. 1-96. Rogas discusses Voltaire's treatise with Riches, pp. 70-75.

¹³ *Il Consiglio d'Egitto* appears in I, pp. 485-601 (p. 587).

reason and justice should prevail and that life should be enjoyed, using dialogue with the writer to suggest a vision for improving society.

Interestingly, Stendhal also belongs to this Enlightenment interpretation of the world, and Sciascia notes on several occasions that Stendhal was born too late, with a 'mente settecentesca in corpo ottocentesca'.¹⁴ Sciascia insists on the joy of literature that Stendhal instils, on Stendhal's 'bisogno di scrivere' which translates into the reader's 'bisogno di rileggerlo' (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1098). Sciascia links Stendhal with hope, and returns to the idea that when Stendhal is read change may occur:

Stendhal ha dei lettori nel 1977, dei lettori giovani quali si addicono alla sua sempre giovane opera. Li ha avuti nel 1880: la prima ondata in cui vanno compresi Federico Nietzsche, gli scrittori del realismo, gli intellettuali che sostennero l'innocenza di Dreyfuss. Li ha avuti nel 1935: e da noi a questa data va registrato il sorgere della coscienza antifascista. Sarebbe un buon segno se ne avesse nel 1977 [...] Tra le tante inchieste e statistiche inutili che si fanno, una per sapere quanti lettori ha Stendhal, e specialmente tra i giovani, sarebbe delle più indicative. Nel senso delle illusioni, della speranza, o delle delusioni, della non speranza. (*Nero su nero*, II, p. 791)

Reading the classics, then, has real and contemporary relevance. Sciascia asserts that reading texts such as Stendhal's may shape the beliefs and the attitude of the reader and push her to act against injustice. In Sciascia's timeline, the key historical moments, where individuals take a stand against individual acts of injustice (Dreyfuss) and institutionalized injustice (fascism), are linked to a high readership of Stendhal's texts, suggesting that Stendhal's writing has something

¹⁴ *Cruciverba*, II, p. 1008. Sciascia's notion of the C18th was in any case conceptual, as the essay 'Il secolo educatore' (II, pp. 1006-1016) charts the C18th as beginning in 1679 with the death of Jean-François-Paul de Gondi, Cardinal of Retz, and ending in 1814 with the death of Charles-Joseph de Ligne (II, p. 1007). Just as Stendhal should have belonged to the C18th, so, Sciascia argues, Rousseau and Sade were posthumous to the century (II, pp. 1013-14). Sciascia later asserts that 'anche Manzoni è figlio del Settecento, come Stendhal', in Porzio, *Fuoco all'anima*, p. 68.

significant to offer at these moments. Thus Sciascia hopes that a high readership in 1977 may lead to a stand against the strategy of tension and against both individual and institutionalized terrorism. Sciascia's dialogue with literature allows him to engage with the concerns of the *anni di piombo*.¹⁵

For Sciascia, the joy of reading Stendhal is a lifelong activity, and he believes that the reader's preferences within Stendhal's texts will eventually undergo an evolution. He writes that

la gioia che dà Stendhal è imprevedibile quanto la vita, quanto le ore di una giornata e quanto le giornate di una vita. Quando e quanto più crediamo di conoscerlo, ecco che ci sorprendiamo a scoprirlo in un passo, in una frase, o a sovvertire, tra i suoi libri, l'ordine delle preferenze, delle affezioni. Si comincia, infatti, col dare la preferenza al *Rosso e nero*, ma ad un certo punto, quasi inavvertitamente, si inclina ad amare di più la *Certosa di Parma*; finché un giorno, improvvisamente, ci si accorge di stare dentro all'*Henry Brulard*. (*Fatti diversi*, III, p. 690)

Eleven years before making this statement in *Fatti diversi di storia letteraria e civile* (1989), Sciascia made a similar claim in an interview with *Mondo operaio*, intrinsically linking the process of maturation in life to maturation in reading.¹⁶ In this way, Sciascia suggests, reading the 'right' books can move the reader towards the 'right' ways of thinking. Sciascia's concept of reading is an exacting one: he stresses the necessity of reading in a joyous, focussed way, as we see in his writings on *Don Quixote*, in *Ore di Spagna*. Here, Sciascia argues that compulsory reading, as favoured by schools, is counterproductive, since 'si può senz'altro ammettere che il leggere per obbligo è peggio che il non leggere' (*Ore*

¹⁵ For a synopsis of the terrorism and political climate of the *anni di piombo*, see Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 349-405 and Norman Kogan, *A Political History of Italy: The Post-war Years* (New York: Praeger, 1983), pp. 232-324.

¹⁶ The interview with *Mondo operaio* is reproduced in Vecellio, *La palma va a nord*, p. 129. Sciascia also refers to the Stendhalian trilogy in Porzio, *Fuoco all'anima*, p. 40.

di Spagna, p. 35). Equally pointless is the type of reading where a text is summarily gulped down in a hurry, without being savoured or digested. Sciascia's criticism of how *Don Quixote* is commonly read may be extended to his vision of the correct way of approaching all texts. Sciascia writes that:

tra i dieci o venti grandi libri che, in una parte più o meno altrove, costituiscono durevole patrimonio umano, il *Don Chisciotte* sia dovunque, Spagna inclusa, uno dei meno letti. E per una ragione semplicissima: che tutti credono di sapere che cosa è, quasi fosse stato letto in una vita anteriore o sognato; o come se continuamente venisse trasmesso per segnali, simboli, figure e situazione [...] pochi sono ormai quelli capaci di leggere con gioia: si legge per imposizione delle ideologie o della moda, per assolvere un obbligo, per poter parlare del libro di cui si parla o per per dire soltanto 'l'ho letto'. (*Ore di Spagna*, pp. 36-37)

For Sciascia, literature may offer guidance and perspective to the reader, but only to an engaged, active reader. Sciascia points the reader towards texts in an almost pedagogical fashion, furnishing bibliographical information for many of his citations so that the reader may enlarge her understanding of the world. This is epitomized by the text *1912+1*, in which five of the sixty-one pages of text are dedicated to bibliographical information.¹⁷ These references to other texts also serve to contextualize Sciascia's own text, and the issues he is exploring, into a wider framework, thus Sciascia's dialogue with other texts is committed to engaging the reader in broader issues.¹⁸

¹⁷ *1912 + 1* appears in *III*, pp. 259-324, in which the last five pages give bibliographical details (pp. 319-324). See Francesca Bernadini, 'L'antirealismo della scrittura', in *Leonardo Sciascia: La mitografia della ragione*, ed. by Francesca Bernadini (Rome: Lithos, 1995), pp. 69-103 (p. 102).

¹⁸ Ricciarda Ricorda observes that from 1970 onwards Sciascia draws on increasingly bilingual quotes, in order to contextualize the Italian situation in an international context, in her chapter 'Sciascia ovvero la retorica della citazione' in her book *Pagine Vissute. Studi di letteratura italiana del Novecento* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1995), pp. 153-77 (pp. 176-77). The chapter initially appeared as an article in *Studi novecenteschi* (16), 1977, pp. 59-93, and focuses on texts written before 1974.

Ricorda goes on to argue that for Sciascia, Stendhal represents the idea that only in literature can truth be found (Ricorda, *Pagine vissute*, p. 188). Certainly, Sciascia sees Stendhal as offering something significant to the reader, but the role of searching for the truth in literature may perhaps be equally well-suited to Manzoni, who is defined for Sciascia both in his methodology in writing and in his belief and actions as a man. Manzoni is embodied by his *Storia della colonna infame*, his 'piccolo grande libro' which in tracing the history of two men unjustly condemned for spreading the plague, raises issues of the individual responsibility of leaders.¹⁹ The salient feature of Manzoni's writings is, for Sciascia, 'moralismo', as he seeks to propagate a more just world (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1076). Manzoni is also a 'uomo classico', in the sense that he has 'la capacità di rappresentare tutto, anche l'angoscia, soprattutto l'angoscia, "con mirabile felicità"' (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1061). Manzoni does not simply document injustice, but also, in Sciascia's eyes, encourages resistance to it. Thus by evoking Manzoni and Manzoni's texts, Sciascia highlights the need for resistance against injustice and believes that reading Manzoni's texts has a valuable role for the contemporary reader. This interpretation of the value of Manzoni is most apparent in Sciascia's reading of the closing pages of *I promessi sposi*. Sciascia believes that Renzo and Lucia leave after all has been resolved, as they have already suffered enough under Don Abbondio's system, 'un sistema di servito volontario, non semplicemente accettato ma scelto e perseguito da una posizione di forza' (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1064). In leaving the region, Manzoni's Renzo and Lucia seek

¹⁹ *Cruciverba*, II, pp. 1066-67; pp. 1069-70.

to escape this system. Manzoni's value lies in documenting with such clarity the state of such a system, which Sciascia sees as perennial. It is

un disperato ritratto delle cose di Italia, della grida, l'Italia dei padri provinciali e dei conte-zio, l'Italia dei Ferrer italiani del doppio linguaggio, l'Italia della mafia, degli azzeccagarbugli, degli sbirri che portano rispetto ai prepotenti, delle coscienze che facilmente si acquietano. (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1065)

Sciascia sees Manzoni as a writer who challenges both religious and lay power. This, Carlo Boumis argues, is a manipulation of Manzoni's actual stance. Boumis examines Sciascia's essay '*Storia della colonna infame*' and claims that Sciascia's choice of translation within the text alters Manzoni's position. Sciascia uses Francesco Cusani's translation of Ripamonti's text, as opposed to the translation that Manzoni cites in *Storia della colonna infame*. As a result, 'religione' and 'patria' are mentioned together, thus condemning not only the government but also the religious powers, an accusation which in Manzoni's text was confined to the lay government.²⁰ Sciascia constructs Manzoni as a champion of justice in the face of government and religious abuse.

For Sciascia, Manzoni's role as a moral writer who seeks to uncover (and to counter) injustice is further embodied by his actions. Sciascia recounts the way in which Manzoni signed a petition for Milanese independence on the back of a hat, when it was brought to him in a rush, and then later made an explicit declaration that circumstance rather than lack of conviction had caused his handwriting to wobble.²¹ When Sciascia evokes Manzoni in a text, he is

²⁰ Carlo Boumis, 'La verità bella. La storia della Colonna Infame tra riscrittura e invenzione', in Bernadini, *La mitografia della ragione*, pp. 141-203 (pp. 168-70).

²¹ *Cruciverba*, II, pp. 1061-62; *Il capitolo XIII: Manzoni e il linciaggio del Prina*, III, pp. 927-39 (pp. 937-38).

conjuring the spectre of a man whose actions and writings were informed by a belief in morality and justice and a belief that literature could play a significant role in bringing both awareness and social improvement.

Sciascia's dialogue with Pirandello is constructed primarily through the repetition of key elements of Pirandello's life and philosophy. Sciascia's study of Pirandello permits him to stress the value of Pirandello's texts in depicting the Sicily of his youth, and also to underscore the importance of reading 'correctly'. Sciascia makes both points by returning obsessively to Adriano Tilgher's reading of Pirandello, which Sciascia believed to be reductive. Rather than representing the dichotomy of 'Vita e Forma' as Tilgher suggests, Sciascia asserts that:

per me, Pirandello è la Sicilia come l'ho conosciuta, come la conosco. Tra le sue pagine è la realtà in cui sono nato e cresciuto e non c'è scarto. L'opera di Pirandello è per me memoria: di fatto accaduti, di persone conosciute; di rivelazioni, sgomenti e terrori vissuti. ('14 domande a Leonardo Sciascia', *I*, pp. xvii-iii)

The pirandellian world signified the drama of identity and relativity, and Sciascia felt himself to be trapped inside this world.²² In a letter to Gian Paolo Prandstaller, Sciascia described this pirandellian world as 'un giuoco di contrasti e di conflitti, di dilacerazioni. Mi sono sempre sentito come sospeso sul baratro dell'irrazionale, dell'assurdo'.²³ For Sciascia, Pirandello's literature was not merely descriptive but constructive, creating the world which Sciascia regards as his primary reference point. Sciascia believed that Pirandello offered an accurate vision of his time and of his society and time, and asserts that Pirandello's writing

²² Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, p. 11. See also Sciascia's essay 'Il volto sulla maschera', in *Cruciverba*, II, p. 1146-1166 (p. 1152).

²³ The letter is published in Prandstaller's essay 'Il neo-illuminismo di Sciascia', which first appeared in *Comunità*, March-April 1964, pp. 89-92. It is reproduced in Antonio Motta's edited volume *Leonardo Sciascia: La verità, l'aspra verità* (Manduria: Lacita, 1985), pp. 173-79.

is as firmly rooted in Girgenti as Edward Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* was rooted in Lewstown.²⁴ Pirandello could offer as valuable a depiction of Sicily as Verga, De Roberto or Brancati.²⁵

Pirandello e pirandellismo (1953), *Pirandello e la Sicilia* (1961) and *Alfabeto pirandelliano* (1988) seek to stress the 'truth' of Pirandello's writing by questioning Tilgher's analysis. Although Massimo Onofri sees the trilogy as part of a 'rilettura quasi ossessiva che lo ha accompagnato nell'arco di circa trentacinque anni', it is difficult to see where Sciascia's 're'-reading takes place.²⁶ Sciascia admitted that the later *Pirandello e la Sicilia* addressed the same themes as *Pirandello e pirandellismo*, although hopefully without the 'molte ingenuità e qualche rozzezza' of the first text, yet there is very little shift in Sciascia's vision throughout the texts.²⁷ The texts differ primarily in terms of the extent to which they draw upon Tilgher's writings and Pirandello's texts to support Sciascia's basic idea that

Tilgher scoprì, nel pubblicistico senso della parola, Pirandello. E quel che è peggio, scoprì Pirandello a se stesso. Lo chiuse in una formula lucida e perentoria, lo costrinse a un processo di involuzione, ad una spirale filosofica in cui la fantasia dello scrittore, che veramente fu grande, si consuma. (*Pirandello e pirandellismo*, III, p. 1026)

Sciascia draws heavily upon Tilgher's essays of 1922 and 1940, quoting them at length in all three of his studies. Tilgher's 1922 essay assigns the critic a privileged role, in the way in which the critic

²⁴ See *Pirandello e pirandellismo*, III, p. 1009 and *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, III, p. 1066.

²⁵ In *Pirandello e la Sicilia* Sciascia suggests that De Roberto's writings embody Sicilian *clientelismo*, Verga represents the focus on *la roba* and Brancati illustrates Sicilian *gallismo* (III, pp. 1056-59).

²⁶ Massimo Onofri, 'Sciascia e Pirandello', *Rivista di studi pirandelliani*, VII, 3 (1989), 9-27 (p. 10).

²⁷ *Nero su nero*, II, pp. 601-846 (p. 839).

pone o propone all'artista dei problemi da risolvere. Meglio: si attende dall'artista che li risolve, e attendendolo, glieli espone [...] L'artista non ha certo bisogno di aspettare che il critico glieli formuli, quei problemi, per conoscerli: se è un vero artista, li sperimenta e se li formula da sé. Ciò non esclude che un critico acuto possa illuminare un autore in cerca di se stesso su quello che è il suo vero problema e contribuire a precisargliene i termini, chiarendogli ciò che è confuso e inespresso gli si agita dentro, suscitando e sprigionando le energie latenti in lui.²⁸

Sciascia also quotes heavily from Tilgher's 1940 essay, in which the critic took much of the credit for the presence of the 'Vita e Forma' binary in Pirandello's work. Tilgher observes that Pirandello had never expressly contradicted Tilgher's reading of his works, and that indeed '*nelle sue opere successive alla pubblicazione del mio saggio, egli espone la sua intuizione della vita e del mondo con le stesse precise parole e formule del mio saggio*'.²⁹ Sciascia makes a point of revealing and of reviewing the work of the critic, stressing the importance of reading 'correctly'. Sciascia highlights the possibility of 'mis-reading', even in the work of a professional reader. Sciascia's insistence on the importance of reading 'correctly' represents another element of his pedagogical approach to literature, along with his provision of suggested further reading.

Sciascia also suggests a 'correct' reading of Pirandello by stressing that Pirandello's fascism should not be used as a lens through which to view his work. Pirandello's fascism, as Farrell observes, did not dim Sciascia's regard for Pirandello as a writer, but it certainly troubled his relationship with his predecessor (Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 48). Indeed, Sciascia asserts that 'uno

²⁸ *Pirandello e pirandellismo*, III, p. 1013, italics in text. Sciascia reproduces Tilgher's essay in greater detail in *Pirandello e la Sicilia* (III, pp. 1117-18) and in abbreviated form in *Alfabeto pirandelliano* (III, pp. 500-501).

²⁹ Sciascia cites Tilgher's essay in *Pirandello e pirandellismo*, III, pp. 1014-15; *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, III, pp. 1118-20; *Alfabeto pirandelliano*, III, pp. 501-502. The italics are in the original text.

scrittore può sbagliare su se stesso, ma l'opera di uno vero scrittore non sarà mai sbagliata. Pirandello è stato fascista, non però la sua opera' (Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, p. 83). Sciascia details the moment in which Pirandello embraced fascism in 1924, in which Pirandello claimed to have joined the fascist party as a reaction against the opposition, and in particular against Matteotti.³⁰ This elicited a furious response from Amendola, in which he attacked Pirandello as a writer and as a man.³¹ Sciascia dwells on Tilgher's response to Amendola's criticism, in which Tilgher observes that Amendola's comments are directed 'non al Pirandello commediografo puro e semplice, ma al Pirandello uomo politico'.³² Sciascia stresses the 'correct' way of reading Pirandello, repeatedly citing, unpacking and refuting Amendola's view of Pirandello as fascist, in the same way as he questioned Tilgher's reading of Pirandello's texts as representing the dichotomy of 'Vita e Forma'.³³ Indeed, Sciascia continuously refutes Henry Ford's view that Pirandello's plays were simple enough to be understood by the masses, affirming the complex value of works which stood outside of formulae or simplistic understanding.³⁴

³⁰ See *Pirandello e pirandellismo*, III, pp. 1016-17; *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, III, p. 1105.

³¹ Amendola attacked Pirandello as an artist, writing that 'e così questo povero autore, che peregrinò vent'anni in cerca di fama – come uno dei suoi personaggi...in cerca d'autore – e che finalmente trovò il suo autore e l'inventore della sua più generosa valutazione non troppo lontano dal bersaglio odierno dei suoi strali *sine ictu*' (*Pirandello e pirandellismo*, III, p. 1018). Sciascia reproduces Amendola's criticism and Tilgher's response in *Alfabeto pirandelliano* III, pp. 504-505.

³² *Pirandello e pirandellismo*, III, p. 1019. See also *Alfabeto pirandelliano*, III, p. 505.

³³ Interestingly, Sciascia employs Tilgher's formula himself in *Alfabeto pirandelliano* (III, pp. 477-78). He also flirts with the notion of using the olive tree which Pirandello spoke of on his deathbed as a perfect symbol for Pirandello's work, rather than the formula, but later dismissed the idea as overly simplistic and reductive (*Pirandello e pirandellismo*, III, p. 1037; *Alfabeto pirandelliano*, III, p. 490).

³⁴ Henry Ford's views are outlined in *Pirandello e pirandellismo* (III, p. 1003) and in *Pirandello e la Sicilia* (III, pp. 1129-30).

Merging dialogues

Sciascia's dialogues with literary tradition point very clearly to a belief that texts contain truths which have relevance and significance for contemporary readers. Yet these literary influences are very diverse, and in fact diametrically opposed. Clearly Pirandello's world view is very different from that of Manzoni, Stendhal or Voltaire, and Sciascia tells us that in order to deal with the Pirandellian reality he was born into, 'mi aggrappai alla ragione, all'altra faccia delle cose e al modo di "ragionarle" di cui avevo esempio in Diderot, in Courier, in Manzoni...' (Padovani, *La Sicilia come metafora*, p. 11). Thus 'a un certo punto, grazie agli illuministi, ecco - mi sono liberato di Pirandello' (Lajolo, *Conversazione*, p. 18). This notion of using the methodology of the writers of reason to rationalize and escape a pirandellian world perhaps requires a little more unpacking than it first seems. Critics have been keen to reproduce the reason / pirandellian dichotomy, but have interestingly selected different models of 'reason', as in fact Sciascia does above. We have already seen the way in which Voltaire represents the notion of reason, whereas Manzoni represents a sense of moral enquiry, and whilst these work within a similar framework, they are by no means synonymous. Farrell argues that in Sciascia's work, Pirandello is balanced by Voltaire, however in Onofri's view, Brancati is the ideal father that Sciascia chooses to counter Pirandello.³⁵ Onofri also asserts the importance of the writers of *La ronda* in balancing Pirandello's influence (Onofri, *Nel nome dei padri*, p. 23). For Antonio Di Grado, Sciascia turns to Verga to counter Pirandello's influence, and

³⁵ See Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 56 and Massimo Onofri's brief article, 'Metafisica della realtà o realtà della fisica?', in *Leonardo Sciascia: La memoria, il futuro*, ed. by Matteo Collura (Milan: Bompiani, 1998), pp. 85-86.

he also argues that in *L'antimonio* Sciascia uses Manzoni to understand the Goyan framework of the Spanish Civil War.³⁶ As Sciascia found truths in all of these writers, then the truths are specific and fragmented, rather than overarching and absolute. The truths in literature play against each other, offering a plurality of vision.

At times, the truth propagated by a writer is allowed a certain totality. This is particularly true in the case of Manzoni, whom Sciascia echoes in both approach and in style. Sciascia's first citation from *Storia della colonna infame* occurs in his 1960 essay 'I fatti di Bronte', which examines the cruel repression of the Bronte uprising in 1860 (*Pirandello e la Sicilia, III*, pp. 1190-1202). At the beginning of the essay Sciascia writes:

nell'introduzione alla *Storia della colonna infame*, considerando la mostruosa ingiustizia che è nel processo e nella condanna degli 'untori', Manzoni dice che 'il pensiero si trova con raccapriccio a esitare tra due bestemmie, che son due deliri: negar la Provvidenza, o accusarla...Ma quando, nel guardar più attentamente a que' fatti, ci si scopre un' ingiustizia che poteva esser veduta da quelli stessi che la commettevano...'. (*Pirandello e la Sicilia, III*, p. 1190)

Sciascia uses Manzoni's account to frame his account of the way in which the uprising's leaders were executed, even though those who ordered the executions knew that the leaders had in fact quelled the uprising at a critical time, thus paralleling his enquiry with Manzoni's investigation into the execution of the two

³⁶ Di Grado compares Pirandello and Verga in his essay 'L'albero genealogico e l'olivo saraceno', in Castelli, *Leonardo Sciascia e la tradizione dei siciliani*, pp. 7-8. Di Grado's analysis of 'L'antimonio' is in his monograph *Leonardo Sciascia: La figura e l'opera* (Marina di Patti: Pungitopo, 1986), p. 35. This use of Goya as paired with Pirandello is interesting, given Sciascia's frequent declarations that the Spanish and Sicilian mindsets were essentially the same, as Sciascia outlines in *Ore di Spagna*. Sciascia writes that 'andare per Spagna è, per un siciliano, un continuo sorgere della memoria storica, un continuo affiorare di legami, di corrispondenze, di "cristallizzazione"' (*Ore di Spagna*, p. 59). See also *Ore di Spagna*, pp. 31-33 and pp. 47-49 and *L'antimonio* (I, p. 380).

supposed 'untori'. Sciascia's dialogue with Manzoni shows him to be taking the same stance, attacking the lack of individual responsibility of the leaders who imposed the punishment. Sciascia also parallels his approach with that of Manzoni in his 1986 investigative text, *La strega e il capitano* (III, pp. 199-257). The text was written in homage to Manzoni, as Sciascia describes in an endnote to *1912 + 1*, and was published to celebrate the bicentenary of Manzoni's birth. (*1912 + 1*, III, p. 319). The text takes Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* as a starting point, quoting an extract which describes the activities of Lodovico Settala in chapter xxxi. Manzoni mentions, almost as an aside, that Lodovico 'cooperò a far torturare, tanagliare e bruciare, come strega, una povera infelice perché suo padrone pativa dolori strani di stomaco' and Sciascia's text proceeds to tell her story (*La strega*, III, p. 204). The investigation that Sciascia undertakes has an approach similar to that of Manzoni's *Storia della colonna infame*, as he uncovers the injustice of the past.

Sciascia does not only adopt Manzoni's approach, but also his style. Perhaps his most interesting dialogue with Manzoni occurs in the essays 'Goethe e Manzoni' and '*Storia della colonna infame*', which appear in *Cruciverba*.³⁷ The first of these essays defines Manzoni's style, in which Sciascia sees him as the 'uomo classico', able to find 'la felicità dello scrivere' even when addressing 'l'angoscia' (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1061). The 'uomo classico' is also armed with irony, as Sciascia establishes in his essay 'Il gattopardo'.³⁸ The second essay,

³⁷ 'Goethe e Manzoni' appears in *Cruciverba*, in II, pp. 1057-1065. '*Storia della colonna infame*' appears in *Cruciverba*, II, pp. 1066-1079. It was written as an introduction to the re-publication of Manzoni's text, on the centenary of Manzoni's death (1973).

³⁸ 'Il gattopardo' appears in *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, III, pp. 1160-69 (p. 1169).

'*Storia della colonna infame*', employs precisely this stylistic approach to deal with the 1937 text, *Peste e untori*, in which Fausto Nicolini seeks to undermine the accounts of Pietro Verri and Manzoni of the unjust execution of the 'untori'. Sciascia annihilates Nicolini's argument that the condemned were guilty according to precedence. One of the men had already been in trouble for dressing up as a friar in order to listen to the confessions of villagers, 'il che', Sciascia writes,

come ognuno vede, era sufficiente a dargli patente di untore anche dubitando delle unzioni e non credendoci addirittura. [...] In quanto al Piazza i suoi vicini di casa lo dicono "giotto", cioè dedito al malfare: e si sa quanto probante sia la testimonianza di un vicino di casa, quando uno sventurato è fermamente tenuto dagli artigli della giustizia. (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1074)

Thus, Sciascia argues, Nicoli fails, ultimately, to see things in their entirety and their context (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1075). Sciascia had already established in the essay 'Goethe e Manzoni' that Manzoni's representation of don Abbondio's system was a perennial problem in Italy (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1065), and he stresses in '*Storia della colonna infame*' that there is still a need for a Manzonian-style enquiry, as

il passato, il suo errore, il suo male, non è mai passato: e dobbiamo continuamente viverlo e guidarlo nel presente, se vogliamo essere davvero storicisti. Il passato non c'è più – l'istituto della tortura abolito, il fascismo come passeggera febbre di vaccinazioni – s'appartiene a uno storicismo di profonda malafede se non di profonda stupidità. La tortura c'è ancora. E il fascismo c'è sempre. (*Cruciverba*, II, pp. 1073-74)

Sciascia dialogues with Manzoni's vision of the world, adopting his predecessor's approach and style almost wholesale as he believes that his world, in which the government seeks scapegoats for terrorism they are at least partly responsible for,

is the same as Manzoni's world, where the ruling powers sought scapegoats for the plague, thus his enquiry may be Manzoni's enquiry.³⁹

It is Sciascia's dialogue with Pirandello which conflicts with and problematizes his dialogue with other writers, as Pirandello's world-vision is so different. However, this is not always the case: Onofrio Lo Dico argues that the twin presences of Pirandello and Brancati in *A ciascuno il suo* work together in harmony (Lo Dico, *Tecniche narrative*, pp. 71-85). Such harmony represents the exception rather than the rule, and Pirandello undermines Sciascia's homage to Voltaire, *Candido*, but equally, the homage to Pirandello, *1912 + 1*, is invaded by the presence of D'Annunzio.

In *Todo modo*, Don Gaetano argues that all the books in the world may be re-written, 'tranne *Candide*'.⁴⁰ Three years later, as Roberto Deidier notes, Sciascia writes the un-writeable.⁴¹ Although Sciascia attempted to imitate the 'velocità e leggerezza' of Voltaire's text, the fact that the time in which he lived was 'assai greve' prevented this.⁴² The tale of *Candido* Munafò, rather than homage to Voltaire, is ultimately hijacked by Sciascia's dialogue with Pirandello. As Farrell writes, 'it is paradoxical that in fashioning a work which was to be the act of homage par excellence to Voltaire, Sciascia escaped from the encampment

³⁹ Francesca Bernadini suggests that *L'affaire Moro* is also reminiscent of Manzoni's writing, as is the character Rogas in *Il contesto*, as he is a man who 'riesce a vedere al di là delle carte degli uomini, gli individui, i personaggi', as Sciascia suggests Manzoni did in the essay 'Storia della colonna infame', (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1075). See Francesca Bernadini, 'L'antirealismo della scrittura', pp. 74-75. Sciascia's dialogue with Stendhal also appears as a largely unproblematic discourse. Stendhal is linked to hope and joy in literature, such as in Nocio's poem in *Il contesto* (II, p. 47). Ricorda argues that the evocation of Stendhal in *Candido* is also clear and straightforward (Ricorda, *Pagine vissute*, p. 182).

⁴⁰ *Todo modo* appears in II, pp. 97-203 (p. 188).

⁴¹ Roberto Deidier, 'L'allegoria della Ragione: *Candido* tra Sciascia e Voltaire', in Bernadini, *La mitografia della ragione*, pp. 35-68 (p. 59).

⁴² *Candide* appears in II, pp. 347-461 (p. 461).

of strict reason he had constructed for himself' (Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 137). Perhaps the framework of Sciascia's dialogue problematizes the very notion of using reason as a tool. Farrell compares the differing scopes of Voltaire's and Sciascia's projects: Voltaire's was a satire on Leibnitizian optimism, whereas Sciascia's 'more diffuse targets included all beliefs that the world was amenable to improvement' (Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 137). These targets included the Church, the Communist party (*PCI*) and Freudianism, and the extent of the critique perhaps makes reason an inappropriate tool: a reasoned discourse on so many targets would ultimately become unwieldy and enormous.⁴³ There are elements of the satire which draw on Voltaire's satire, such as the episode in which Candido is sent as a stretcher-bearer to Lourdes, as a way to cure him of his religion. There, the sight of so much human suffering horrifies Candido, which is crucial as it is precisely human suffering which undermines Leibnitz's assertion that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds in *Candido* (Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 143). However Sciascia's satire is more wide-ranging and is based principally on Bontempelli's notion of candour, which for Sciascia was intrinsically linked to Pirandello. Bontempelli writes that:

la prima qualità delle anime candide, è l'incapacità di accettare i giudizi altrui e farli propri. L'anima candida affacciandosi al mondo lo vede subito a suo modo: la impressione e il giudizio degli altri, anche di tutti gli altri, di tutto il mondo, che si affretta ad andarle incontro e cerca insegnarle [*sic*] tante cose, tanti giudizi fatti; questo non la scuote, ella può al tutto maravigliarsene. Spesso non li capisce neppure, i giudizi altrui; li sente come parole complicate. Invece lei ha un linguaggio proprio, semplice ed elementare. E l'effetto immediato del candore è la

⁴³ Farrell offers an interesting reading of the Freudianism in *Candido*, examining Candido's oedipal relationship with his mother, the death of the three fathers (his biological father, his grandfather Arturo Cressi and the American John Hamlet Dykes) and don Antonio's role as analyst (Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, pp. 138-41).

sincerità. L'anima candida non fa concessioni. (III, *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, p. 1140)

This describes Candido perfectly, in his refusal to accept received wisdom and instead to judge each situation on its merits. Although this may also be true for *Candide*, Sciascia's critical writings do not link the definition with Voltaire but rather with Pirandello. He constructs the character which is to be homage to Voltaire precisely in the terms he finds so apt to describe Pirandello.⁴⁴ That is not to say that Voltaire is rejected completely. Farrell is right to point out that Candido at the end of the text turns his back on the statue of Voltaire rather than Voltaire himself, rejecting the deification of the man rather than his ideas (Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 145). Lo Dico has highlighted Candido's love of corporeality and his pleasure in eating and drinking, and Lo Dico's observation may perhaps be developed to suggest that this materialism may be homage to Voltaire (Lo Dico, *Tecniche narrative*, p. 173). Certainly, Sciascia notes that a central concern for Voltaire was the notion that 'alla dura fatica dovesse corrispondere il godimento del frutto', thus the materialistic element of Candido may perhaps compensate for the way in which he turns from Voltaire's statue.⁴⁵ Although rejecting Voltaire's image, Candido embraces his way of living.⁴⁶

Just as dialogue with Pirandello hijacks Sciascia's homage to Voltaire, so the homage to Pirandello is invaded by D'Annunzio. Sciascia describes *1912 + 1*

⁴⁴ Roberto Deidier on the other hand suggests that in *Candide*, Voltaire's rationalism is filtered through Pirandello's *umorismo*, which is an interesting perspective but perhaps less convincing than the idea of rationalism filtered through candour (Deidier, 'L'allegoria della ragione', p. 55). Farrell uses the lens of candour to read not only *Candide* but also *La scomparsa di Majorana* and *L'affaire Moro* (Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 127).

⁴⁵ II, *Cruciverba*, p. 1012; II, *Candide*, p. 460.

⁴⁶ For Voltaire's materialism, see his *Lettres philosophiques* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1964), in particular letter XIII (pp. 82-88).

as 'un omaggio a Pirandello' in an endnote to the text, which recounts the trial of Maria Tiepolo.⁴⁷ The wife of an officer, Maria, stood trial for the murder of her husband's batman, Polimanti. That she had killed the soldier was not in doubt; the trial sought to establish whether she had killed him to defend her honour, as she claimed, or whether the killing was a premeditated venture which sought to cover up a compromising affair. Much of the evidence and testimonies pointed to ambiguity and layered truths, and Sciascia concluded that 'tutto era già pirandelliano, nel caso Tiepolo. Le tante verità, il gioco dell'apparire contro l'essere' (1912 + 1, III, p. 316). Yet Sciascia's dialogue appears to be as much with D'Annunzio as with Pirandello. The very title of the text, 1912 + 1, is taken from D'Annunzio's superstitious way of writing 1913, and the text opens with an account of Léon Blum applauding D'Annunzio's play (1912 + 1, III, pp. 263-64). D'Annunzio is cited frequently in the text, and even the court transcripts are said to be written in a style reminiscent of the one-eyed poet (1912 + 1, III, p. 283). Sciascia tells us that 'D'Annunzio era nell'aria, come mai, credo, in Italia nessun'altro scrittore' (1912 + 1, III, p. 284). D'Annunzio dominates the text to such a degree that Sciascia's homage to Pirandello is pushed into the shade.

In 1912 + 1, as in *Candido*, the truths that Sciascia sees his chosen writer as representing sit uncomfortably with the truths embodied by other writers which also have a relevance to the situation. Sciascia believes that the writers and texts he draws upon do convey important truths. The fact that these may be contradictory does not undermine the writings, but reflects the chaos of the world

⁴⁷ 1912 + 1, III, p. 319. For a detailed analysis of Pirandellian echoes throughout Sciascia's texts, see Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, pp. 32-60 and Francesca Vennarucci's essay 'Il leitmotiv della scomparsa', in Bernadini, *La mitografia della ragione*, pp. 205-57.

and suggests the need for plurality and openness. The limitations of each vision reflect the restricted value of any over-arching ideology, and encourage scepticism. Sciascia saw extending doubt and engendering scepticism as one of the most important roles of the writer, thus by setting up authors as purveyors of truth and then showing their limits, Sciascia uses dialogue with tradition to promote his vision of social commitment.⁴⁸

The opposing truths of writers do, however, marry together in some of Sciascia's last works, namely in *Alfabeto pirandelliano* and in *Occhio di capra*.⁴⁹ The subject matter of both is Pirandello's world, as *Alfabeto* examines elements of Pirandello's life, work and home, and *Occhio di capra* catalogues the dialect of Sciascia's home town. Although this would have differed from the dialect of Pirandello's home (one of the salient themes of the text is *campanilismo*), it seeks to preserve a dialect from Pirandello's region. The desire to catalogue, Sciascia argues, is a defining characteristic of the 'secolo educatore', in which the writers of encyclopaedias and dictionaries sought to impose an order on society to elevate it from 'brutalità' (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1009). This order was, Sciascia admits, a fiction of order, but was nonetheless necessary. Sciascia then adopts the methodology of the Enlightenment writers to order the chaotic influence of Pirandello and Sicily. The texts ask the reader to consider notions of regionalism and identity, of conflict and contradiction through a rational framework.

⁴⁸ In *Nero su nero* Sciascia responds to attacks on 'lo scetticismo inattivo di Sciascia', observing that since scepticism entails extending doubt, it cannot, by definition, be considered inactive (*Nero su nero*, II, p. 663). For Sciascia, engendering scepticism represents a valuable engagement.

⁴⁹ *Occhio di capra* (1984) appears in III, pp. 1-105.

Sciascia's dialogues marry together to ask the reader to engage with questions of multiplicity, identity and belonging.

Dialogue between Sciascia's texts

Sciascia's texts do not only draw on and dialogue with the work of other writers but also refer to his own texts. That he expects the reader to view his works as a whole becomes apparent in the endnote to *1912 + I*, where Sciascia contextualizes his homage to Pirandello in the light of his homage to Manzoni a year previous, in *La strega* (*1912 + I*, III, p. 319). Certainly, Sciascia was aware that texts may develop or re-write themes and concerns of earlier works by a writer, as becomes clear in his essay 'Il "borgese" e il borghese' (*Cruciverba*, III, pp. 1074-83). Here, Sciascia analyses Pirandello's short story 'La verità' and play *Il berretto a sonagli*, which recount a similar story of a man who pretends to be unaware of his wife's infidelity so as not to have to take action. In the former, Sciascia argues, the conflict between truth and lies is external, whereas the latter internalises the conflict. Whereas Sciascia detects a shift in the presentation of personal, internal issues in Pirandello's work, the development and mutation of themes and ideas in his own work are related more to the changing world he lives in and his attitude towards that reality. This is most apparent in Sciascia's six detective stories (*Il giorno della civetta*, *A ciascuno il suo*, *Il contesto*, *Todo modo*, *Il cavaliere e la morte*, *Una storia semplice*).⁵⁰ Although Farrell sees the last two texts as belonging to a different fictional universe, Anne Mullen is right

⁵⁰ *Il giorno della civetta* appears in I, pp. 387-483; *A ciascuno il suo* appears in I, pp. 775-887; *Il cavaliere e la morte* appears in III, pp. 403-465; *Una storia semplice* appears in III, pp. 729-761.

to argue that the texts do in fact form a cycle, where 'they each in turn evolve from the preceding giallo, to varying degrees, thematically and even conceptually, with Sicily as both the point of departure and return'.⁵¹ Sciascia's first two detective novels, marked by the failure of the detective to ensure a conviction, are set in Sicily. *Il contesto* is set in an un-named space, whilst *Todo modo* and *Il cavaliere* are both set in northern Italy. These texts illustrate how the perennial problems of Sicilian mafia and corruption had become commonplace in Italy. Mullen notes that whilst *Una storia semplice* is set in Sicily, there are no Sicilian features to the landscape, suggesting that Sciascia, at the end of his life, believed that Italy and Sicily were indistinguishable (Mullen, 'Leonardo Sciascia's Detective Fiction', p. 93). Mullen notes that *Il cavaliere* shares the abstract themes and political concerns of *Il contesto* e *Todo modo*, and it is worth unpacking her observation in more detail, as the dialogue between these texts represents a clear engagement with the changing socio-political climate (Mullen, 'Leonardo Sciascia's Detective Fiction', pp. 92-93).

Both *Il contesto* and *Il cavaliere* examine the workings of a shadowy group of figures who represent the real power structure, and the ways in which they seek to benefit from public terror, created by terrorist groups. In *Il contesto*, a dark coalition of government figures, members of the armed forces, members of the secret service and the opposition make use of a series of murders by the ex-convict Cres, allowing the public to believe that *gruppuscoli* are behind the killings, in order to impose more authoritarian government. In *Il cavaliere*

⁵¹ Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 147; Anne Mullen, 'Leonardo Sciascia's Detective Fiction and Metaphors of Mafia', in *Crime Scenes: Detective Narratives in European Culture since 1945*, ed. by Anne Mullen and Emer O'Beirne (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 88-99 (p. 90).

however, the *figli di Ottantanove* group has actually been created by a similar shadowy coalition, rather than simply exploited. The key question of the text asks 'se i figli dell'ottantanove sono stati create per uccidere Sandoz o se Sandoz è stato ucciso per creare i figli dell'ottantanove' (*Il cavaliere*, III, p. 442). In Sciascia's 1988 text, the notion that the group exists for its own, purely revolutionary ends, is inconceivable. The concept that the terrorist groups could work alone is ridiculed far more in *Il cavaliere* than in *Il contesto*, which simply mocks the appearance of the *gruppuscoli*, such as in Nocio's poem.⁵² In *Il cavaliere* however, the only group member to be found is caught making a threatening call from a telephone box, spotted by a deaf-mute who managed to find a police officer, convince him of what he had seen and return in time to still catch the youth, even though 'non era mai accaduto che la polizia riuscisse a prendere, per quanto lungo fosse la telefonata, uno che telefonasse a consumazione dei reati del terrorismo o sequestro di persona' (*Il cavaliere*, III, p. 445). *Il cavaliere*, written after the *anni di piombo*, during which the involvement of the secret services in terrorist activities (not least of which the Moro case) became increasingly evident, is certainly a great deal bleaker than the 1971 novel *Il contesto*.⁵³ The text attacks not only the secret services but also the terrorists themselves. Sciascia evokes the Italian Resistance, recalling that the *Vice's* father helped Rieti's father to escape anti-Semitic measures (*Il cavaliere*, III, p. 438).

⁵² *Il contesto*, II, p. 46. Luigi Cattanei rightly observes that Nocio's derision of the revolutionary groups echoes Sciascia's own sentiments, in *Introduzione e guida allo studio dell'opera Sciasciana: Storia e antologia della critica* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1979), p. 93.

⁵³ The gradual emergence of the role of the secret services in right-wing terrorism is discussed in Philip Willan, *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy* (London: Constable and Company, 1991).

This brave act clearly has little to do with the activities of the 'figli dell'ottantanove', thus Sciascia underlines the difference between the young revolutionaries' claims to follow a noble tradition, and the actual realities. This would seem to engage not just with the textual revolutionaries' claims to follow the ideals of the French revolution, but also with the claims of the *Brigate rosse* (BR) to be heirs of the Resistance.⁵⁴ By mentioning the Resistance, Sciascia is able to engage with and refute such claims. There is a definite sense that *Il cavaliere* takes the ideas of *Il contesto* and darkens them. Certainly, in 1988 Sciascia admitted to being in a state of serene despair, believing that nothing would change in Italy.⁵⁵ This belief is represented in his re-working of his text.

Dialogue within Sciascia's texts

Maria Grazioli observes that whereas dialogue usually functions as a method for arriving at the truth, in Sciascia's texts this is undermined.⁵⁶ She argues that interrogations and investigations fail and that

snaturato il genere dialogico in se stesso, il processo di svuotamento del discorso procede a negare il valore del dialogo come acquisizione della verità, trasformandolo, al contrario, in una macchina di nascondimento, attraverso delle tecniche che tornano costanti durante tutto l'arco della produzione di Sciascia. (Grazioli, 'Il dialogo negato', p. 117)

Grazioli points to, amongst other things, don Mariano's attempts to keep his subordinates in the dark in *Il giorno della civetta* (I, p. 533) and Riches not

⁵⁴ The BR's claims to be heirs of the Resistance are outlined in Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968-1978* (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 279-94. See also Mario Moretti, *Brigate Rosse: Una storia italiana. Intervista di Carla Mosca e Rossana Rossanda* (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 2000).

⁵⁵ The interview with *La Repubblica* on December 17 1988 is cited in Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 161.

⁵⁶ Maria Alexandra Grazioli, "Per null'altro che per amore della verità". *Il dialogo negato*, in Bernadini, *La mitografia della ragione*, pp. 105-40.

wanting to learn the truth from Rogas in *Il contesto* (II, pp. 67-68). This reading seems rather narrow and fails to grasp the importance of dialogue in Sciascia's texts, which allows polyphony of voices and subsequent plurality of viewpoint. As Bakhtin argues, the novel is defined by its plurality of belief systems, with the hero generally acting within his own system.⁵⁷ The polyphony of Sciascia's texts embraces this plurality by establishing the protagonist's adversaries as worthy interlocutors. As in Sciascia's dialogue with other writers, the importance of accepting plurality rather than believing in absolute truths is stressed. There is, however, an interesting shift in Sciascia's last texts towards a suppression of dissenting voices.

Polyphony is a key feature of Sciascia's critical works. His earlier works resonated with the voices of critics and writers and appeared as symphonies. This is neatly encapsulated in 'Goethe e Manzoni', in which Sciascia's own interpretation of Manzoni is presented alongside that of Goethe's. Goethe's presence is such that mid-way through the text Sciascia writes, 'qui conviene che mi allontani dalla grande ombra di Goethe per parlare un po' in prima persona' (*Cruciverba*, II, p. 1062). In his work on Pirandello, the voices of the critics Renato Serra, Arrigo Cajumi, Tilgher, Croce and Gramsci contest or support Sciascia's own views.⁵⁸ In his essays, Sciascia does not just summarise the views of others, but allows their voices to make their own case. Thus in 'Il secolo educatore', it is Paul Valéry who is allowed to make a case for the need to instil

⁵⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by M. Holquist, trans. by C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), p. 334.

⁵⁸ A particularly salient example may be found in 'Note pirandelliane', in which Sciascia compares the views of Renato Serra, Arrigo Cajumi and Savinio as to whether Pirandello's plays were better than his novels, or vice versa (*Cruciverba*, II, pp. 1137-40).

(a fiction of) order, and his argument is quoted at length (*Cruciverba*, II, pp. 1009-11).

Such polyphony is also present in Sciascia's fictional texts. Onofrio Lo Dico writes of 'la pluridiscorsività delle *Parrocchie*' and explores Sciascia's technique of allowing characters in his first text to express ideas which may not agree with the narrating voice (Lo Dico, *Tecniche narrative*, pp. 40-67). The text is also populated by various linguistic registers, and Lo Dico makes an interesting comparison between the register of the father, as he drags his child to school, and Sciascia's lyrical descriptions (Lo Dico, *Tecniche narrative*, pp. 52-56). This plurality of viewpoint is maintained throughout Sciascia's texts, with don Mariano in *Il giorno della civetta*, Riches in *Il contesto* and Don Gaetano in *Todo modo* all portrayed as worthy interlocutors to the protagonist, even though they hold views antithetical to Sciascia and his protagonists.⁵⁹ The dialogue between Rogas and Riches is particularly interesting, as they debate the possibility of judicial error. Ricorda has suggested that Voltaire is Riches' real interlocutor, as he is debating the validity of Voltaire's *Traité sur la tolerance à l'occasion de la mort de Jean Calas*, which Rogas accepts and Riches contests (Ricorda, *Pagine vissute*, p. 172). This certainly places Riches in a very privileged position, especially as he claims to know Voltaire's text by heart, and his argument against the *Traité* is reasoned and logical, if not accepted by Rogas (or Sciascia) (*Il contesto*, II, pp. 71-72). Riches locates (what he believes to be) the weak point in

⁵⁹ See the discussions between Bellodi and don Mariano in *Il giorno*, I, pp. 461-72, and between don Gaetano and the artist, in *Todo modo*, II, pp. 113, 163, 187, 189.

Voltaire's argument, and develops his thesis that judicial error cannot exist accordingly (*Il contesto*, II, pp. 72-3).

This polyphony is strikingly absent from Sciascia's later texts, in particular from *La strega e il capitano* and from *Porte aperte*. *La strega e il capitano* is based on the trial transcripts in which Caterina was condemned as a witch, yet Carlo Boumis argues that Sciascia's re-writing of the event is false and deliberately silences the voices in order to make Caterina, the accused, appear positive and credible (Boumis, 'La verità bella', pp. 175-203). In addition to factual omissions (Sciascia does not mention a second 'spell' by Caterina, in which she mixed menstrual blood and pubic hairs in the Senator's food), Boumis suggests that Sciascia always selects the least tenable of Caterina's (many) explanations in order to make any foul play appear fanciful. Sciascia also silences the testimonies of those who assert Caterina's guilt. Certainly, Sciascia's text does not allow those who disagree with him to speak. A similar censoring occurs in *Porte aperte*. Although this text too is based on a documented case, Sciascia dramatises the dilemma faced by 'il piccolo giudice' who, in 1934, must decide whether or not to sentence the accused to death for his triple murder, as expected by the new fascist legislation. In a text which revolves around the moral decision of the judge, in a climate in which not only party officials but also the general public expect to see the death penalty implemented, it is curious that nobody, as Farrell notes, at any point makes the case for capital punishment (Farrell, Leonardo Sciascia, pp. 158-60). This is in great contrast to the lively debate of *Il contesto*. The later works contain more of an authorial presence, with Sciascia as

writer interjecting more forcefully. Farrell draws attention to Sciascia's sudden question in *1912 + 1*, in which he wonders what Perry Mason's reaction would have been to the admission of unsubstantiated evidence, and Farrell also signals Sciascia's unexpected comment in *Porte aperte* that 'il piccolo giudice' was not short at all (Farrell, *Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 149). The later texts then become less polyphonic and more dominated by Sciascia's voice, perhaps a reaction to his feeling of serene despair, and a desire to make his voice heard in a climate where the voices of the *pentiti* and corrupt politicians drown out the voice of reason.⁶⁰

Some conclusions

In 1981 Sciascia argued that 'dovremmo sempre dialogare, polemizzare' (Lajolo, *Conversazione*, p. 77). His writings constantly dialogue with other texts, with his own texts and within his own texts. Such dialogue does not confine itself to questions of literature, but allows a real engagement with the issues of the day. Sciascia asserts that literature can contain important truths with real significance for readers, in offering approaches such as reason or moral enquiry. These interpretations of how to live are by no means absolute, and Sciascia's conflicting dialogues assert the importance of plurality. His later texts show a desire to find a uniform voice to contest the newly divisive over-emphasis on plurality which allowed the *pentiti*'s version of events to hold sway. As such, Sciascia attempts to merge the conflicting voices of his literary influences into alphabets, which catalogue issues of identity and irrationality into a reasoned form, and to suppress

⁶⁰ Sciascia's great opposition to the use of *pentiti* to secure criminal convictions emerges in *A futura memoria (se il futuro ha una memoria)*, III, pp. 763-898. See also John Dickie, *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2004), pp. 379-403.

voices which disagree with his own vision. This seems to be a reaction against the blackening state of Italy, illustrated by the dialogue between his texts, in which only the voices of criminals and the corrupt are audible. Sciascia's methodology of dialoguing with the literary canon, with his own texts, and his illustration of dialogue within texts, rather than rejecting socio-political engagement in favour of an exclusively literary discourse, actively embrace dialogue with his time.

4.3 Dialogue with the Past and the Self in Tabucchi

Tabucchi's texts demonstrate both an implicit and an explicit awareness of the ways in which literary heritage and books of the past colour our perceptions and ideas. For the protagonist of 'La Battaglia di San Romano' in *I volatili del Beato Angelico*, going to Spain 'era come spostare la tenda di turaccioli di un'osteria un po'sporca ad entrare in un libro di Hemingway, era quella la porta della vita, sapeva di letteratura come una pagina di *Fiesta*'.¹ Meanwhile the protagonist of *Notturmo indiano* has a sense that he has already visited his hotel, but then realizes that 'alberghi così popolano già il nostro immaginario: li abbiamo già trovati nei libri di Conrad o di Maugham, in qualche film americano tratto dai romanzi di Kipling o di Bromfield: ci sembra quasi familiare'.² The range of literary heritage upon which Tabucchi draws, even within single texts, is vast and heterogeneous, including Borges, Conrad, James, Keats, Mann, Márquez, Pessoa, Pirandello, Rilke and Shakespeare.³ He also draws on artistic heritage, in particular the paintings of Bosch, Velásquez, Van Gogh and Paolo Uccello: indeed Tabucchi notes that 'le arti che più mi hanno influenzato sono le arti

¹ Antonio Tabucchi, *I volatili del Beato Angelico* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1998), p. 54. The text was first published in 1987.

² Antonio Tabucchi, *Notturmo indiano* (Palermo: Sellerio, 2000), p. 80. The text was first published in 1984.

³ Walter Geerts for example identifies dialogue with Shakespeare, Rilke and Blanchot in Tabucchi's *Il filo dell'orizzonte*, whilst JoAnn Cannon sees *Requiem* as drawing both on Borges and Calvino. See Walter Geerts, 'Il filo dell'orizzonte di Antonio Tabucchi: Una lettura della morte', in *Piccole finzioni con importanza: Valori della narrativa italiana contemporanea* (Convegno internazionale- maggio 1991, Università di Anversa, con la partecipazione di Antonio Tabucchi), ed. by Nathalie Roelens and Inge Lanslots (Ravenna: Longo, 1993), pp. 113-124, and JoAnn Cannon, 'Requiem and the Poetics of Antonio Tabucchi', *Forum Italicum*, 35, no. 1 (Spring 2001), 100-109.

visive, sostanzialmente la pittura e il cinematografo'.⁴ Tabucchi's range of references is also represented by the ways in which he dialogues with dense philosophical ideas yet also draws on Tuscan nursery rhymes.⁵

Notions of intertextuality and dialogue with literary heritage suggest a focus on self-reflexivity and interiority at the expense of dialogue with social issues. This chapter will examine the ways in which Tabucchi uses it instead as a subtle form of engagement. Tabucchi's notion that literature may contain truths, valuable to an active reader, will be explored through the prisms of dialogue with Freud and with French literature. Dialogues with Montale and Verne indicate Tabucchi's position regarding pessimism, whilst sustained dialogue with Fernando Pessoa, Tabucchi's most prominent literary influence, permits engagement with notions of the self and of the importance of questioning. The themes of questioning and re-assessment are further explored through Tabucchi's self-referencing and dialogue between his own texts. The chapter will finally assess how important Tabucchi considers dialogue to be, in all its manifestations, as a form of engagement.

⁴ Antonio Borsari, 'Cos'è una vita se non viene raccontata? Conversazione con Antonio Tabucchi', *Italienisch: Zeitschrift für Italienische Sprache und Literatur*, 13, no. 2, 26 (November 1991), 2-23 (p. 9). See also Anna Botta, 'An Interview with Antonio Tabucchi Conducted by Anna Botta', *Contemporary Literature*, 35, no. 1 (Spring 1994), 421-440 (p. 433) and Giovanni Palmieri, 'Per una volatile leggerezza: Il "lato mancato" di Antonio Tabucchi', in Roelens and Lanslots, *Piccole finzioni*, pp. 125-136 (p. 136).

⁵ In 'The Return of the Spiritual, with a Note on the Fiction of Bufalino, Tabucchi, and Celati', *Annali d'italianistica*, 19 (2001) 93-102, Charles Klopp argues that Tabucchi's focus on remorse and on the impossibility of reliving the past is influenced by the philosophy of Vladimir Jankélévitch, who taught Tabucchi at the Sorbonne. Giovanni Palmieri on the other hand identifies the title of 'Staccia Burratta' in *L'angelo nero* as rooted in a Tuscan nursery rhyme ('Per una volatile leggerezza', p. 131).

The place of literary interiority

Although this chapter will argue that the majority of Tabucchi's representation of dialogue between texts is used to engage with contemporary issues, both personal and socio-political, it would be ingenuous to claim that all dialogue fulfils this function. Elements of Tabucchi's portrayal of intertextuality do focus on the limitations of writing and on the difficulty of saying something new, when both the reader, and indeed the writer, are imprinted with the influence of literary heritage. This notion is explored in its most extreme manifestation in the short story 'Il piccolo Gatsby', part of the 1981 collection *Il gioco del rovescio*.⁶ The story is narrated by a writer who, as Monica Jansen notes, is caught between total identification with Fitzgerald's writing and the desire to be original.⁷ The writer considers all those around him to be characters from Fitzgerald's texts *Tender is the Night* and *The Great Gatsby* and his originality lies in subverting details and altering the texts.⁸ The narrator, in his inability to write a new novel, finds pleasure in the 'inganno' of inventing false quotes and attributing them to Fitzgerald (*Il gioco*, p. 85). Tabucchi's protagonist is caught in an impasse and is unable to step outside of intertextual discourse in order to make his own voice heard. Through this short story Tabucchi illustrates his awareness of the potential dangers inherent in dialogue between texts, yet the vast majority of his writings testify to his ability to avoid such pitfalls, and to his belief that literature is able to

⁶ *Il gioco del rovescio* was first published in 1981, then was re-published in 1988 with a preface and three additional stories; 'Il gatto dello Cheshire'; 'Vagabondaggio'; and 'Una giornata a Olimpia'. Page references are to the 2000 Feltrinelli edition, which is a re-print of the 1988 text.

⁷ Monica Jansen, 'Tabucchi: Molteplicità e rovescio', in Roelens and Lanslots, *Piccole finzioni*, pp. 137-146 (p. 138).

⁸ Carina Meyer-Boschi analyses the significance of the green light in Tabucchi's text, which represents the transformation of Gatsby's hopes in the original text, in her article 'La quête nella narrativa di Antonio Tabucchi', *Narrativa*, 10 (September 1996), 73-100 (pp. 98-99).

enunciate valuable truths that may be successfully communicated to a reader who is also prepared to engage with her contemporary world.

The notion of truth in literature

I wish to begin my analysis of Tabucchi's use of intertextuality by examining Tabucchi's dialogue with Freud. This is not strictly an intertextual relationship in the literary sense, but does offer an interesting and useful prism through which to examine the concept that writing may transmit a truth to an active reader. It also serves as a useful reminder of the immense range of ideas that Tabucchi draws upon in his literature, as illustrated by his text *Sogni di sogni*, in which he imagines the dreams of figures as diverse as Ovid and Debussy.⁹ Freud's theories are scattered throughout many of Tabucchi's texts, ranging from mere mentions to more complex problematization. On a very simple level for example, the protagonist of the 1994 text *Sostiene Pereira* constantly refuses to recount his dreams, as he believes that they are private, which would seem to be a criticism of Freudian dream analysis.¹⁰ Tabucchi's dialogue with Freud (and indeed with other psychoanalysts) has however been explored in greater depth by scholars, particularly in relation to the 1991 text *Requiem*.¹¹ Anna Botta has examined how *Requiem* engages with Freud's 1915 essay 'Mourning and Melancholia' and with Melanie Klein's 1940 article 'Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive

⁹ Antonio Tabucchi, *Sogni di sogni* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1992).

¹⁰ Antonio Tabucchi, *Sostiene Pereira* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1998), pp. 79 & 114. The text was first published in 1994.

¹¹ Tabucchi wrote *Requiem* in Portuguese in 1991, and an Italian translation by Sergio Vecchio appeared in 1992. Page references refer to the 2001 Feltrinelli edition.



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knowledge. This is clearly different to the position of other texts, in which the notion of unconditional truths in literature is problematized, and where Tabucchi asserts that reading offers a valuable guide to engaging with the world, but with the caveat that the truths be balanced against other views. Although the level of faith in literature as a means to engage may vary, the common factor remains that Tabucchi uses dialogue between texts to promote dialogue with his contemporary world.

Pessimism, Montale and Verne

Just as Tabucchi uses the French writers to symbolically stand for the idea of resistance in *Sostiene Pereira*, so he uses Montale to represent the notion of gathering evil in *L'angelo nero*.²³ The text, drawing together short stories which represent a growing sense of unease, is dedicated to Montale, 'che prima di me si è imbattuto in un angelo con le ali nere' (*L'angelo*, p. 10). Tabucchi uses the image of the black-winged angel of Montale's poem 'Piccolo testamento' to represent his own sense of disquiet at the state of the world, and Montale thus appears as an embodiment of an idea.²⁴ Such a traditional use of Montale however is not sustained elsewhere. In his article 'Tabucchi: Una Conversazione Plurivoca', Francese has argued that Tabucchi rather alludes to Montale in *I volatili del Beato Angelico* as a way of situating himself as an intellectual, as a way of differentiating himself from the pessimism and passivity of Montale's postwar poetry. Francese argues that Fra Angelico's search to understand and to

²³ Antonio Tabucchi, *L'angelo nero* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2002). The text was first published in 1991.

²⁴ Eugenio Montale, *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Giorgio Zampa (Milan: Mondadori, 1990), p. 275.

communicate with the creatures elevates Tabucchi above Montale's pessimistic isolation.²⁵ In a later article, Francese goes on to argue that the evocation of Montale in the play 'Il signor Pirandello è desiderato al telefono' in *I dialoghi mancati* again differentiates Tabucchi from the pessimistic view of Montale.²⁶ Francese compares Tabucchi's lines 'vagheremo come un pulviscolo / nel vuoto di questo universo / neppure coscienza infima / di ciò che non siamo stati' to Montale's lines in *Ossi di Seppia*, 'codesto solo oggi possiamo dirti, / ciò che non siamo, ciò che non vogliamo', concluding that whilst Montale's persona is symptomatic of an overwhelming sense of negativity, Tabucchi's actor-poet recognizes the indeterminacy of the present and the relativity of the past.²⁷ Importantly, this relative and indeterminate vision is only one of two options considered by Tabucchi's actor-poet. The first, as he stands by a window and listens to the cannons rumbling as they bring destruction and death, is to engage with the minds which bring such chaos to bear. He asks, 'non sanno che il mondo è mondo / per essere dubitato, essi credono, battagliaano, / e per questo anche noi moriremo' (*I dialoghi*, p. 30). Only after a pause does he 'molto basso' consider the possibility of the 'altra morte' in the emptiness of the universe (*I dialoghi*, p. 30). Thus whilst Francese is right to identify the subtle difference between Tabucchi's and Montale's positions, it is equally important to recognise that Tabucchi's actor-poet also suggests engaging directly with the reality surrounding him, doubting and questioning the world. Tabucchi dialogues with Montale to

²⁵ Joseph Francese, 'Tabucchi: Una Conversazione Plurivoca', *Spunti e ricerche*, 6 (1990), 19-34

²⁶ Antonio Tabucchi, 'Il signor Pirandello è desiderato al telefono', in *I dialoghi mancati* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2002), pp. 7-44. *I dialoghi* first appeared in 1998.

²⁷ *I dialoghi*, p. 30. Joseph Francese, 'The Postmodern Discourses of Doctorow's Billy Barthgate and Tabucchi's *I dialoghi mancati*', *Annali d'italianistica*, 9 (1991), 182-97 (p. 190).

establish that Montale's approach and position are not the only viable option, and that even in a climate of despair the poet may engage. This sense of playing with and distancing himself from Montale's work is developed in *Si sta facendo sempre più tardi*, where the writer of the first letter notes that 'come piacerebbe questo luogo a certi poeti che conosciamo, perchè è così scabro, essenziale [...] non è un luogo, è un buco: intendo della rete', evoking Montale's lines from 'Mediterraneo' and 'In limine'.²⁸ The later letter 'Il fiume' is set 'nel perimetro esterno della piccola pieve abbandonata fra gli sterpi e i sassi. E forse con qualche biscia, ché i poeti ce la vogliono, anche se non vidi nessuna', recalling Montale's 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto'.²⁹ In both cases, Tabucchi observes that the landscape (perhaps metaphysical as well as physical) surrounding him is similar to that of Montale, but that he will focus on different things and look beyond the negative, perhaps hinting that some of the features Montale looks at are not really there. Thus Tabucchi's dialogue with Montale stresses the limitations of the poet's vision and his passive negativity, encouraging the reader to take a different approach, to doubt and to engage.³⁰

In one of his most potentially pessimistic tales, Tabucchi suggests dialogue with literature as a tool for engaging with and resolving the issues facing the protagonist. The short story 'Capodanno', in *L'angelo nero*, recounts a young

²⁸ *Si sta facendo*, p. 13. Montale's 'Mediterraneo' begins 'avrei voluto sentirmi scabro ed essenziale' (*Tutte le poesie*, p. 59), whilst the voice of 'In limine' 'cerca una maglia rotta nella rete / che si stringe' (*Tutte le poesie*, p. 70).

²⁹ *Si sta facendo*, p. 28. The voice of 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' sits 'presso un rovente muro d'orto, / ascoltare tra i pruni e gli sterpi / schiocchi di merli, frusci di serpi' (*Tutte le poesie*, p. 30).

³⁰ Burns examines the way in which the title and elegaic mood of 'La trota che guizza fra le pietre mi ricorda la tua vita' (*L'angelo nero*, pp. 91-106) are redolent of Montale (*Burns, Fragments*, p. 68).

boy's struggle to come to terms with the murder of his father by partisans during the Second World War. The boy begins to communicate with Jules Verne's Captain Nemo, whom he believes will act as his guide, both in a literal sense in guiding him to his father's body at the bottom of a lake, and metaphorically in becoming a substitute father-figure. In Tabucchi's story, the young boy's fear and sadness, and his need for a guide to help him to cross uncharted, murky waters, becomes symbolic of postwar Italy, in need of a strong, guiding figure to navigate an uncertain future. Through his dialogue with Verne, Tabucchi is able to engage with the sense of instability and insecurity following the war. By drawing on a heroic figure such as Nemo, Tabucchi is also able to dialogue with issues in his own time, in particular the representation of the Resistance. Some years after the *Brigate rosse* (BR) and other terrorist groups claimed to be heirs of the Resistance, Tabucchi is questioning the portrayal of the partisans as wholly positive.³¹ The hero Nemo is called upon to lead the boy to his dead father, thus problematizing the notion of the Resistance as unquestioned heroes. For the young protagonist who lost his father, they are by no means saviours. Through his dialogue with Verne, Tabucchi is asking the reader to question all interpretations which claim to offer Manichean views of black and white, of good and evil, and to problematize and unpack them. Tabucchi's dialogue with Verne allows him to engage with issues of the past, issues which also inform his present.

³¹ The BR's claims to be heirs of the Resistance are analysed in Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy 1968-1978* (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 279-94.

Pessoa

Whilst the writings of Montale and Verne appear sporadically in Tabucchi's writings, his dialogue with Pessoa is more sustained and indeed evolves with time, as Tabucchi accepts in changing degrees the level of truth in Pessoa's texts. Tabucchi first encountered Pessoa's writings by accident, choosing a volume of his poetry from a bookseller on the Seine by chance, selecting it mainly because it was cheap.³² Tabucchi was so impressed by the poetry that he went on to study Portuguese at University and to become one of the foremost Italian scholars on Pessoa, translating Pessoa's major work, *The Book of Disquiet*, into Italian.³³ Tabucchi's critical writing on Pessoa is collected in *Un baule pieno di gente*.³⁴ Pessoa is often cited as a source of truth in Tabucchi's texts. When Pessoa is evoked, he is usually described as one of the (if not the) most important poets of the twentieth century.³⁵ In *Il gioco del rovescio* Pessoa is hailed 'un genio' (*Il gioco*, p. 13), whilst Pessoa's work provides the key to a mystery in the 1984 text *Notturmo indiano*, again elevating Pessoa's verses to a status of literary truth and insight (*Notturmo* p. 61).

Perhaps the greatest influence that Pessoa had on Tabucchi relates to his notion of heteronyms, which began to emerge when Pessoa was only a child. By the time he was six, both his father and his younger brother had died and Pessoa had begun writing to an imaginary friend, the Chevalier de Pas, 'attraverso il

³² Alberto Scarponi, ed., *Alberto Arbasino, Italo Calvino, Andrea Camilleri, Umberto Eco, Mario Luzi, Claudio Magris. Dacia Maraini, Antonio Tabucchi raccontano se stessi* (Rome: Gangemi, 2002), pp. 112-13.

³³ Fernando Pessoa, *Il libro dell'Inquietudine di Bernardo Soares*, trans. by Maria José de Lancastre & Antonio Tabucchi, preface by Antonio Tabucchi, (Feltrinelli: Milan, 2004).

³⁴ Antonio Tabucchi, *Un baule pieno di gente: Scritti su Fernando Pessoa* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2000).

³⁵ *Un baule*, p. 11; *Requiem*, p. 13; *Notturmo*, p. 58; *I volatili*, p. 47.

quale scrivevo lettere a me stesso'.³⁶ The imaginary people in Pessoa's life developed until he eventually wrote his poetry through a whole host of heteronyms, characters with a whole life and history who wrote in their own style, with their own handwriting (Pessoa's calligraphy altered depending on who was writing). Some of the most important of the many heteronyms were Bernardo Soares, a book-keeper to whom the diary-esque *The Book of Disquiet* was entrusted; Alberto Caeiro whom Pessoa considered the Maestro of all the other heteronyms (and indeed of himself): Alvaro de Campos, a homosexual naval engineer who studied in Glasgow and lived a dandy's life in Lisbon.³⁷ The notion of heteronyms raises important questions regarding the multiplicity of the self, and certainly, in *Un baule pieno di gente* Tabucchi writes that 'con Pessoa una delle grandi preoccupazioni della letteratura della nostra epoca, l'Io, entra in scena e comincia a parlare di sé [...] forse in nessun'altra epoca come nella nostra l'uomo intelligente ha sospettato di essere tanti uomini' (*Un baule*, p. 28).

In dialoguing with Pessoa, Tabucchi is able to confront both literary questions and important social concerns about the multiplicity of a subject. The first influence of Pessoa is manifested in Tabucchi's use of re-appearing characters, which seem to live independently of their creator and hold truths inaccessible to him. Tabucchi describes Pessoa's world of heteronyms as

un mondo fragilissimo come un cristallo, che chiude questi personaggi (i vari scrittori eteronimi di Pessoa stesso) nella loro assoluta autonomia, dove ciascuno di essi non ha bisogno di posare i piedi su un palco per esistere e neppure ha bisogno di partecipare a una trama narrativa per poter affermare le sua esistenza. Infatti l'operazione di Pessoa è radicale

³⁶ Pessoa is cited in *Un baule*, p. 130.

³⁷ A comprehensive 'Table of Heteronyms' can be found in Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, trans. by R. Zenith (Allen Lane: Penguin, 2001) pp. 505-509.

all'estremo: pone nello spazio astratto della poesia delle creature creanti. Uno scrittore di norma crea un personaggio il cui compito è semplicemente di vivere, non di creare. Pessoa invece, ponendo al posto dell'autore il personaggio e al posto del personaggio l'autore, a suo modo risolve il problema del rapporto fra i due. (Scarponi, *Raccontano se stessi*, p. 121)

Jonathan Smith has claimed that Tabucchi uses heteronyms as far back as his first novel, *Piazza d'Italia*, published in 1975, however I think the most obvious cases of Tabucchi's heteronym-esque characters (I would hesitate to give them the full title of heteronyms) are Isabel, Tadeus and Xavier.³⁸ These characters appear in various novels, usually holding a truth which is inaccessible to the protagonist. The love triangle of the protagonist-Isabel-Tadeus emerges in both *Requiem* and *L'angelo nero*, and sees the protagonist trying to wrest information from them about Isabel's abortion and subsequent suicide. Xavier, on the other hand, is the elusive friend whom the protagonist of *Notturmo indiano* is searching for, who also exchanges a series of letters with a character named Tabucchi in *I volatili del Beato Angelico*. These characters are independent, and the heteronym analogy is further strengthened by the fact that Tadeus and Xavier are both writers, as of course Pessoa's all heteronyms are. Tabucchi tells us that these three characters are those with whom he interacts most, that 'J'aimerais savoir ce qu'ils deviennent, où ils en sont, qu'ils se confessant plus avant. J'ai l'impression de ne pas avoir été au bout de leur histoire'.³⁹ These characters, holding truths inaccessible to the writer, further undermine the concept of absolute truth in literature.

³⁸ Jonathan Smith, 'Tabucchi Echoes Lacan: Making an End of "Postmodernism" from the Beginning', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 18 (2000) 77-108 (pp. 88-89).

³⁹ Catherine Argand, 'Entretien avec Catherine Argand', in Antonio Tabucchi, *Romans II*, trans. by Lise Chapuis (Paris: Christian Bourgois Editeur, 1998), pp. 165-175 (p. 172).

The second manifestation of Pessoa's influence on Tabucchi lies in Tabucchi's focus on the multiplicity of the self. Francese identifies this as Pessoa's most important legacy, and examines such multiplicity in *Notturmo indiano* and *Il filo dell'orizzonte*, where the protagonist is searching for another, an other in whom he himself is reflected (Francese, 'Una conversazione plurivoca', p. 20). Francese's point is very valid and can, I think, be usefully expanded to Tabucchi's other, later texts, such as *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro*, in which the journalist Firmino is looking for himself as much as for the identity of the missing youth.⁴⁰ The multiplicity of the protagonist of *Sostiene Pereira* plays an important role in developing his engagement with society. Pereira's multiplicity is based on the philosophy of the hegemony of the personality, which sees the individual personality 'come una confederazione di varie anime, perché noi abbiamo varie anime, dentro di noi, nevvvero, una confederazione che si pone sotto il controllo di un io egemone' (*Sostiene Pereira*, p. 123). In the course of the novel Pereira succeeds in changing the ranking of his selves, evolving from a lethargic onlooker into an engaged and active participant in life. Intertextuality with Pessoa's texts and ideas opens up questions about the ways in which the individual interacts with the world around her, about how much the thinking subject can really know and understand. In the case of Pereira, such multiplicity permits the individual to evolve into a more engaged character, ready to immerse himself in his political environment, indicating the importance

⁴⁰ Antonio Tabucchi, *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2002). The text first appeared in 1997. Schwarz Lausten suggests that Tabucchi's characters' search for a missing other may also be effectuated through identification with characters from film literature, (*L'uomo inquieto*, pp. 91-96). She argues that this identification represents the main reason for Tabucchi's intertextual references.

of such multiplicity and the fact that it offers the reader the possibility of such a transformation. Tabucchi's dialogue with Pessoa opens up new ways for the reader to understand herself, her multiplicity and the myriad of possible ways of acting in society.

Tabucchi does not unquestioningly accept Pessoa's notion of heteronyms, but rather adapts the central concept to his own writing. This illustrates that even in the case of Pessoa Tabucchi is unwilling to accept a truth or vision offered wholesale. On one level, Francese rightly argues that whereas Pessoa lives exclusively within the immanence of his writings, outside the flow of time, Tabucchi is very much rooted in his contemporary reality.⁴¹ Certainly, Tabucchi adopts the concept of multiplicity of characters to interrogate how the individual acts in society. Tabucchi's view of the heteronyms, of independent characters, is furthermore not wholly determined by Pessoa's vision but is also informed by the ideas outlined in the preface to Pirandello's *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*, in which Pirandello describes the way in which the characters would visit him until he found them a play.⁴² This notion is reproduced on several occasions as Tabucchi describes the genesis of his texts, illustrating that Pessoa's influence is mediated by Pirandello. Tabucchi writes that

c'est entre la veille et le sommeil, dans ce moment particulier où la pensée se met à divaguer et devient songe, que j'entends des voix. Peu à peu, à force des visites, ces voix deviennent des visages, des silhouettes puis des personnages prolixes par qui je me laisse conduire, à l'instinct.⁴³

⁴¹ Joseph Francese, 'Tabucchi's Fragments of Lovers' Discourses', *Italica*, 80, no. 3 (2003 Autumn), 389-402 (p. 391). Francese makes a similar observation in 'Tabucchi: Una Conversazione Plurivoca', p. 29 and in 'L'eteronimia di Antonio Tabucchi', *Stanford Italian Review*, 11, no. 1-2 (1990), 123-38 (p. 132).

⁴² Luigi Pirandello, Luigi, *Maschere nude* (Milan: Mondadori, 1965), pp. 7-8.

⁴³ Argand, 'Entretien avec Catherine Argand', p. 172. Tabucchi makes similar statements in a 1994 interview with Anna Botta, stating that 'a character may show up inside of you and begin to

In the same interview Tabucchi writes that the characters which he creates are 'des personnages réels, aussi vivants que vous et moi qui méritent le même respect' (Argand, 'Entretien', p. 171), recalling the stage directions in *Sei personaggi* that 'i Personaggi non dovranno infatti apparire come *fantasmi*, ma come *realtà create*, costruzioni della fantasia immutabili: e dunque più reali e consistenti della volubile naturalità degli Attori' (Pirandello, *Maschere nude*, pp. 26-27, italics in text). The fact that the ideas that Tabucchi takes from Pessoa are informed by Pirandello is further underlined by Tabucchi's notion that the problem of the self and the question of the character as a real person remains the central focus for both Pirandello and Pessoa (Borsari, *Cos'è una vita*, p. 11). Perhaps the key difference lies in Tabucchi's analysis of modernist currents in a 1978 article 'Alvaro de Campos e Zeno Cosini: Due coscienze parallele'.⁴⁴ Here Tabucchi argues that the common denominator in the modernist texts of Joyce, Svevo, Musil, Pessoa, Pirandello, Kafka and Beckett is the anti-hero, the inept, incapable failure. Yet whereas Kafka, Pirandello and Beckett stop at this negative image, Joyce, Proust, Pessoa and Svevo go beyond it. Svevo and Pessoa, Tabucchi argues, find reason and plausibility in a life which seems implausible

visit you in a way that's obsessive and very annoying. When that happens, you feel you have a tenant inside, a character who demands a voice, who demands a face, who irritates, who knocks at the door, who speaks, who utters sentences' (Botta, 'An Interview with Antonio Tabucchi', p. 431). Earlier, in a 1986 article 'Il monolocale del racconto', Tabucchi notes that he has followed his characters, that 'li ho generosamente ricevute dentro di me, li ho trattato come ospite d'onore', thus it seems a constant preoccupation (*Alfabeta* 84 (May 1986) p. xii). Alessandro Iovinelli has also noted how Tabucchi's description of how Pereira would visit him at night recalls Pirandello (Iovinelli, 'Antonio Tabucchi e il paratesto di *Requiem*', *Narrativa*, 16 (September 1999), 205-15 (p. 206). Iovinelli argues that the way in which marginal characters have no name in *Requiem* indicates that they are Pirandellian masks (Iovinelli, 'Il paratesto di *Requiem*', pp. 206-207).

⁴⁴ Antonio Tabucchi, 'Alvaro de Campos e Zeno Cosini: Due coscienze parallele', *Studi filologici e letterari dell'Istituto di filologia romanza e ispanistica dell'Università di Genova* (Genoa: Bozzi, 1978) 151-62.

and unreasonable (Tabucchi, 'Due coscienza parallele', pp. 151-52). In drawing heavily on Pessoa, Tabucchi too is seeking to find reason and plausibility, a way of navigating life, rather than just indicating the problems. Although his dialogue with Pessoa is informed by Pirandello, Tabucchi primarily takes on and develops Pessoa's multiplicity as a way of dealing with the concerns of his own era of uncertainty. Such favouring of Pessoa is illustrated by the play 'Il Signor Pirandello è desiderato al telefono' in *I dialoghi mancati*. In the play, Pessoa, or an actor playing Pessoa, or Pessoa playing an actor playing Pessoa, attempts to telephone Pirandello, but eventually does not succeed (*I dialoghi*, p. 16). The play is written from Pessoa's perspective, and adapts some of Pessoa's own lines in the play, whilst Pirandello is characterized by his absence.⁴⁵ This indicates Tabucchi's closer link to Pessoa and to Pessoa's search to understand life rather than to embrace negativity (much as Tabucchi rejects Montale's mantle of pessimism). Dialogue with Pessoa permits Tabucchi to engage with questions of the self and identity, without the burden of negativity encapsulated by writers such as Beckett and Pirandello.⁴⁶

The relationship with Pessoa however is not unproblematic or static, and Tabucchi increasingly rejects even Pessoa's vision as an unquestionable truth. Tabucchi's 1991 text *Requiem* is generally seen as a turning point in his relationship with Pessoa. Joseph Francese, for instance, notes the increasing use

⁴⁵ Laura Lepschy identifies Pessoa's lines which Tabucchi uses in 'Antonio Tabucchi: Splinters of Existence', in *The New Italian Novel*, ed. by Zygmunt Barański and Lino Pertile (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 200-218 (p. 211).

⁴⁶ Schwarz Lausten argues that Tabucchi places so much value on Pessoa as he believed Pessoa to be the first writer to consider the notion of a divided subject (Schwarz Lausten, *L'uomo inquieto*, p. 88).

of pessoan heteronyms during the 1980s, whilst Louise Sheehan and Anna Botta view *Requiem* as marking a point of departure from Pessoa's influence.⁴⁷ Certainly, the idea of closure is suggested by the end of the novel, when the protagonist meets his dinner companion (Pessoa) and tells him that 'Lei non ha più bisogno di me, [...] c'è il mondo che l'ammira, ero io ad avere bisogno di lei, però adesso vorrei smettere di avere bisogno, tutto qui' (*Requiem*, p. 119). Similarly the title *Requiem*, meaning 'bringing rest where there is none', may be seen as exorcising Pessoa's *The Book of Disquiet* (where there is no rest), as Botta highlights (Botta, 'Mourning Modernism', p. 145). Sheehan argues that after *Requiem* Tabucchi experiences a new level of Portuguese-ness, as his characters evolve from Italians visiting Portugal into actual Portuguese characters (Sheehan, 'Tabucchi's Portugal', p. 487). Thus in *Requiem*, Tabucchi's relationship to Portugal is no longer mediated through Pessoa and Pessoa may be put to one side.

I would argue however that Tabucchi does not move on from his fascination with Pessoa with the 1990 text *Requiem*, but rather with his 1994 work *Gli ultimi tre giorni di Fernando Pessoa*.⁴⁸ If *Requiem* represents Tabucchi's desire to lay Pessoa to rest, then *Gli ultimi tre giorni* represents Pessoa laying his own issues to rest. Tabucchi believed that Pessoa did not find peace on his deathbed (*Un baule*, p. 24) which may explain why he could not move on from the poet's influence until he had helped him to resolve unanswered

⁴⁷ Francese, 'L'eteronimia di Antonio Tabucchi', p. 123; Botta, 'Mourning Modernism', p. 145; Louise Sheehan, 'Tabucchi's Portugal', in *Cross-cultural Travel: Papers from the Royal Irish Academy Symposium on Literature and Travel*, ed. by Jane Conroy (New York, Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 285-295 (p. 487).

⁴⁸ Antonio Tabucchi, *Gli ultimi tre giorni di Fernando Pessoa* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1994).

issues, in literature if not in life (perhaps of equal validity for Pessoa). In the course of *Gli ultimi tre giorni*, the character Pessoa settles his final accounts with those most important to him - both real and imaginary. He whispers his apologies to his one true love, Ophélia Quéiroz, and allows his heteronyms to tell him their secrets, so that they may achieve closure. He in turn tells them that he already knew their secrets, thus unburdening himself at the same time. The combination of *Requiem* and this short fictional account of Pessoa's final days represent, I would argue, Tabucchi's recognition that Pessoa's work contains truths, yet that these truths are not absolutes.

Tabucchi's belief that the modernist writers and thinkers such as Freud, Montale, Pessoa and Pirandello hold valuable truths but that they must be considered partial and fragmentary is, I would suggest, what marks him out as a postmodernist writer. There is no metanarrative to which he can fully subscribe, even if that metanarrative represents a belief in division, such as division of the subject, as Pessoa, Pirandello and Freud outline in different ways. Tabucchi's texts illustrate that even these philosophies, when taken to extremes, become flawed and must be rejected. Discussion of whether Tabucchi's notion of the divided subject is more influenced by Freud, Pirandello or Pessoa is perhaps less important than a recognition that Tabucchi rejects all of these metanarratives in favour of a reading which draws on each one but accepts none in its entirety. I would suggest that it is Tabucchi's insistence on fragmentation, his assertion of the need to question and to challenge ideas, rather than his exploration of

ontological concerns, which distances him from modernism and situates him firmly in the postmodernist camp.

Such questioning is crucial, and Tabucchi's dialogue reveals Tabucchi's insistence that the reader must question everything, and re-evaluate as situations (and people) develop. By re-assessing his relationship to Pessoa, Pirandello and Freud, Tabucchi asks the reader to re-assess and to review their ideas and to question whether they are still valid. These processes are important in navigating the contemporary world, in its state of flux. They may perhaps be considered especially important in the chaos of the Italian political scene at the end of the Second Republic in the early 1990s.⁴⁹ It may be significant that this is precisely the period in which Tabucchi published *Requiem* (1991) and *Gli ultimi tre giorni* (1994); texts which re-assess and call into question his belief in his most powerful influence, Pessoa. Re-assessment does not necessarily entail a complete rejection of old ideas and affections, either in terms of a new political climate or in terms of Tabucchi's relationship to the modernist writers. Thus to suggest that the influence of Pessoa, whom Anna Botta has described as 'Tabucchi's spiritual father, a presence which looms over all the Italian author's fiction', simply fades from his work, perhaps oversimplifies the complex relationship that Tabucchi has with Pessoa (Botta, 'Mourning Modernism, p. 145). A character Taddeo appears in Tabucchi's most recent novel, *Tristano muore*, and perhaps represents a new incarnation of Tadeus, a new heteronym, just as the new parties formed in the

⁴⁹ The various changes occasioned by the end of the Second Republic are outlined in Gundle and Parker, *The New Italian Republic*.

1990s represent new incarnations of the old power blocs.⁵⁰ Or perhaps, as Biasin suggests, 'Antonio Tabucchi' is the last, posthumous, unforeseen heteronym of Pessoa.⁵¹

Intertextuality

The re-appearance of what we might term Tabucchi's semi-heteronyms throughout his texts leads to a dialogue between them. The characters never appear as rounded individuals, but rather as snapshots which the reader must piece together. The character Tadeus, for example, appears as a ghost in *Requiem*, recalling a past shared with Isabel and the protagonist (*Requiem*, pp. 37-49). A fragment of his voice emerges in the story 'Voci portate da qualcosa, impossibile dire cosa' in *L'angelo nero*, which adds more detail to the story that he tells in *Requiem*. Tadeus' apparition as a poet in 1969 in Portugal in 'Notte, mare o distanza' in the same collection is wholly compatible with the information that the reader learns elsewhere. The character Xavier is also interesting, as he appears in both *Notturmo indiano* and through a collection of letters between a Xavier Janata Monroy and an Antonio Tabucchi in 'La frase che segue è falsa. La frase che procede è vera', in *I volatili*. The exchange of letters develops conversations which supposedly happened during the voyage across India, but which were not

⁵⁰ See Paul Furlong, 'Political Catholicism and the Strange Death of the Christian Democrats', in Gundle and Parker, *The New Italian Republic*, pp. 59-71.

⁵¹ Gian Paolo Biasin, *Le periferie della letteratura: Da Verga a Tabucchi* (Ravenna: Longo editore, 1997), p. 145. The notion of the posthumous heteronyms of Pessoa is interesting and is also explored in José Saramago's *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, trans. by Giovanni Ponteiro (London: Harvill, 1992). In Saramago's text, Ricardo Reis returns to Lisbon after Pessoa dies, outliving his creator. Pessoa's ghost visits Reis for a period of nine months before retreating to the spirit world, in an inversion of the period spent in the womb, where one is present in the world without being a part of it.

recounted in *Notturmo indiano*. They also allude to conversations which do appear in *Notturmo*, but are attributed to a different episode, as the conversation that Xavier refers to in 'La frase che segue' as being reported in chapter six, actually takes place in chapter four of *Notturmo*. The appearances of both Tadeus and Xavier illustrate the incomplete and contradictory nature of books, highlighting the way in which the reader is always faced with a fragment. Tabucchi's dialogue between his texts forces the reader to be suspicious of texts and to actively question them, to piece together fragments and analyse the larger mosaic, never offering a complete picture. By highlighting the intertextuality of his own texts, Tabucchi asks the reader to engage with the ideas and truths which she is presented with and to challenge them. Such a practice should, Tabucchi's writing suggests, be expanded into the way in which the reader deals with the information she is presented with in the 'real' world, questioning, analysing, accepting that she is only offered fragments rather than the whole picture. This is certainly true in Italy, when contemporaneous with Tabucchi asking the reader to interrogate the truths offered by his texts and by the authorities, leading figures were indicted in political scandals, culminating in the *mani pulite* investigations.⁵² However the need to interrogate the fragments of information which the reader is offered in the contemporary world "is an international phenomenon, as illustrated by the warning that the photographer Christine gives

⁵² For a selected analysis of the corruption charges, including the *Gladio* revelations and the *mani pulite* investigations, see Anna Bull, 'Italy and the Legacy of the Cold War', *The Italianist*, 18 (1998), 364-80; Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871-1995* (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 414-47; Matt Frei, *Italy: The Unfinished Revolution* (London: Mandarin, 1996), pp. 3-30; Paul Ginsborg, *Italy and Its Discontents: Family, Civil Society and State 1980-2001* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 140-41, 170-72, 187; Stephen Gundle, 'The Rise and Fall of Craxi's Socialist Party', in Gundle and Parker, *The New Italian Republic*, pp. 85-97.

in *Notturmo indiano* to '*méfiez-vous des morceaux choisis*' (*Notturmo*, p. 102). The warning is given as Christine first shows the protagonist a photo of what appears to be a black South African winning a race, arms aloft. A second photograph, showing a wider scene, reveals that he is under fire from police and is already dead. A more light-hearted look at the dangers of accepting an image or an idea without questioning if it is fragmentary appears at the beginning of *Notturmo indiano*. Here, the protagonist arrives at his hotel in a poor area, only to discover that the hotel is much worse in real life than how it appeared in an image, as 'le fotografie chiudono il visibile in un rettangolo. Il visibile senza cornice è sempre un'altra cosa. E poi quel visibile aveva un odore troppo forte' (*Notturmo*, p.15). Tabucchi insists that information is given as fragments, both in texts where his characters re-emerge to stress the existence of information outside the frame, and in the world at large. Dialogue between texts, rather than excluding issues of contemporary importance, asks the reader to (re)examine them closely.

The idea that Tabucchi stresses the fragmentary nature of the interpretation his texts offer the reader contradicts Iovinelli's analysis of Tabucchi's paratext. Iovinelli charts how Tabucchi's texts use epilogues, prologues, introductory 'note', margin notes, footnotes and information about the real historical or literary characters or places which appear in the text. He writes that

il carattere del paratesto in Tabucchi è in generale esplicativo: l'autore fornisce al lettore gli elementi geografici, storici, letterari, ecc. per situare nel giusto contesto il libro che sta per leggere o ha appena letto. È come se il lettore non avesse diritto all'immaginazione, come se l'esattezza e il

controllo dei dati fossero imprescindibili. Tabucchi vuole eliminare in lui ogni incertezza: in questo modo il lettore conosce un processo più agevole, ma la fantasia è irremediabilmente in trappola. (Iovinelli, 'Il paratesto di *Requiem*', p. 206)

Yet whereas Iovinelli argues that this functions to deny the reader the right to imagine, to eliminate every uncertainty, it seems rather that the paratext reminds the reader that the text is an invention, something to be questioned and problematized.⁵³ The framework offered, which seeks to contextualize events and narratives, is shown to be flawed, asking the reader to question and to interrogate all such frames. This is particularly important in the 1980s and 1990s, when politicians sought to explain corruption as part of a wider context. Tabucchi highlights the limits and flaws of such frameworks by problematizing the paratext he offers the reader. This is epitomized in *Donna di Porto Pim*. The text does, as Iovinelli rightly notes, contain a map. However this map offers the reader no real practical information, as it is too small in scale to show any detail about the islands of the Azores and too large in scale to offer any helpful information regarding the geographical position of the islands.⁵⁴ It is there to remind the reader that Tabucchi has written his vision of the islands, a fragmentary, partial vision. The reader is asked to interrogate all such metaphorical maps and to recognize their limitations.

⁵³ Schwarz Lausten suggests that whilst Tabucchi's paratexts provide information, they also have a hermetic function, leaving the reader with unresolved mysteries and enigmas (Schwarz Lausten, *L'uomo inquieto*, p. 103).

⁵⁴ Michael Caesar has observed that it is impossible for the reader to hold any composite picture of the Azores in *Donna*, as the islands are constructed through memory, dream and an overheard conversation. Michael Caesar, 'Italian Fiction in the 1980s', in *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, ed. by E.J. Smyth (London: Batsford, 1991), pp. 74-89.

The absence of dialogue

Tabucchi's work posits dialogue with literary tradition as an important way of engaging with society, and suggests that the act of reading can shape an individual's way of perceiving the world. Dialogue in any form can help to shape consciousness and understanding, as becomes clear in *Sostiene Pereira*. Pereira's transformation is effectuated partly by his interaction with French literary texts, but also by his conversations with key characters. Silva, a college friend, represents an extreme version of Pereira's own reluctance to engage with the political status quo, and through speaking to Silva Pereira is forced to question the implications of his own attitude (*Sostiene Pereira*, pp. 63-65). Conversations with Ingeborg Delgado and Padre Antonio push Pereira towards a more active participation in affairs, whilst Doctor Cardoso's theory of a shifting hegemony of the ego allows Pereira to believe that change is possible.⁵⁵ These conversations, along with Pereira's literary dialogues, transform him into an intellectual who is ready to challenge the violence around him.

Tabucchi reinforces the importance of dialogue through his depiction of a world without dialogue in his play 'Il tempo stringe', in *I dialoghi mancati*. The play consists of Enrico's monologue in a hospital room, as he contemplates his brother's dead body. Enrico emerges as a bitter and damaged individual, who was unable to voice his resentment towards his brother. The absence of dialogue between them in life is replaced by Enrico's monologue, in which he imagines his brother's responses. Tabucchi's play illustrates the human need for dialogue and interaction for self-development.

⁵⁵ *Sostiene Pereira*, pp. 71-71; 144-47; 122-24.

Some conclusions

Dialogue with people represents an important means of developing individual consciousness, yet as Enrico tells his (dead) brother in 'Il tempo stringe', 'attraverso le poesie si riescono a comunicare certe cose che le parole normali non dicono' (*I dialoghi*, p. 72). Dialogue with literature offers an effective way of engaging with contemporary issues, and Tabucchi asserts that written texts may contain valuable truths to be communicated to the reader, thus intertextuality does not exclude engagement with social and political issues. These truths are by no means absolute and must be balanced against other interpretations. The notable exception lies in Tabucchi's dialogue with French literature, which seems to stand alone in offering a truth. This may be a product of when *Sostiene Pereira* was written (1993), a time of turbulent change when the notion of a solid truth, rooted in the past, perhaps seemed comforting. The fragmentary nature of truths found in most written texts also serves to remind the reader of the partial nature of truth she may be presented with in the non-literary world. This concern was of particular importance during the 1980s and 1990s, with the exposure of political scandals, and the point is reinforced by the intertextuality of Tabucchi's own texts. Dialogue between his texts, the flawed paratext and the (at times) contradictory re-emergence of characters ask the reader to question all she is faced with, beyond the practice of reading. Tabucchi rejects the negativity and pessimism of Montale and Pirandello, and seeks to use literature (and dialogue with literature) as a way of analysing and dealing with his contemporary reality. He uses literature to present the reader with truths which, for all their limitations,

retain a definite significance. Indeed, even these limitations may play an important role in engaging with society, as they highlight the necessity of questioning and re-assessing a world in flux, where the individual is offered carefully selected 'morceaux choisis'.

Part 5:

Conclusions

5.1. The Value of Literature and Journalism

Seeing Sciascia with a bundle of newspapers under his arm one day, Juan Arias asked him, 'Leonardo, cos'è il giornale per te?'. Sciascia responded drily, 'la nostra menzogna quotidiana'.¹ In my introduction I suggest that Sciascia is differentiated from Calvino and Pasolini by his refusal to renounce literature in favour of journalism as a means of engagement. In this concluding chapter, I would like to examine the ways in which Sciascia and Tabucchi represent the different functions that literature and journalism may fulfil; the values with which they imbue the two written forms.² At first glance it appears that the two writers are poles apart, with Tabucchi's texts asserting the value of journalism whilst Sciascia derides newspapers both in his *saggistica* and his novels. Closer analysis however reveals that their positions are not wholly dissimilar, and that they share a vision of the roles that literature and journalism may place in engaging with society.

Sciascia's treatment of newspapers in his novels is scathing. They are portrayed as sensationalist, conformist, and as failing to engage with the most important questions of their time. In *Il cavaliere e la morte*, the *Grande Giornalista* interviews the *Vice* about the supposed terrorist group, asking him, 'questa storia dei figli dell'ottantanove l'avete inventato voi, o ve l'hanno dato

¹ The incident is recounted in Juan Arias, 'Problemi di coscienza', *El País*, 21 November 1989, and is reproduced in *Leonardo Sciascia: La memoria, il futuro*, ed. by Matteo Collura (Milan: Bompiani, 1998), pp. 113-14 (p. 113). The article is translated by A. Polizzi.

² The term 'literature' is itself problematic, as what we mean by 'literature' is not always clear. In this chapter I take 'literature' to mean fiction, or writing which employs fictional lenses (my definitions of fictional lenses are outlined in chapter 1.2 of this thesis, 'Direct Comment on Contemporary Events').

già confezionato?’.³ The *Vice* replies that the police have not invented the story, and that furthermore he suspects the theory to be a concocted tale. The *Grande Giornalista* is taken aback by the *Vice*’s candour, since he expected him to refuse to answer his question, or to deny his suspicions. Yet the *Grande Giornalista* is not exalted at the prospect of writing such an incendiary article and communicating this news to his readers; rather he turns to the *Vice* and asks, “ma che succede?”, *angosciosamente*’ (*Il cavaliere*, III, p. 447, my italics). The *Vice*’s cutting response, ‘ha mai sentito parlare di amore alla verità?’, is telling, as the reader would expect the *Grande Giornalista* to reprovably pose such a question to the *Vice*, rather than to be rebuked himself (*Il cavaliere*, III, p. 447). The *Grande Giornalista* is not driven by a desire to discover the truth; a situation troubling in itself. However the most disturbing element emerges when the *Grande Giornalista* admits that he will not publish the news at all, presumably since he also feels constrained to keep the conspiracy alive (*Il cavaliere*, III, p. 447).

Sciascia’s criticism of newspapers is not confined to contemporary journalism; indeed it appears as a constant throughout his depiction of historical moments. In *1912 + 1*, the newspaper reports of the trial of Maria Tiepolo in 1913 are depicted as sensationalist and inaccurate.⁴ Although Maria Tiepolo was born Maria Oggioni, the newspapers immediately referred to her as ‘la contessa Tiepolo’, citing her as belonging to the same family as the celebrated painter Tiepolo. Soon afterwards, newspapers began to claim that she was connected to

³ *Il cavaliere a la morte* appears in III, pp. 403-65 (p. 446).

⁴ *1912 + 1* appears in III, pp. 259-324.

the Venetian Doges (1912 + 1, III, p. 271). Reports about the deceased batman were equally inaccurate, as his pre-military profession is posthumously promoted from *falegname* to the more specialized *ebanista* (1912 + 1, III, p. 271). The newspaper coverage of the trial in *Porte aperte* is equally unsatisfactory, although from a different perspective.⁵ The newspapers of 1938 simply do not mention the triple murder, or the fact that the defendant is facing the death penalty: 'stando al giornale, nessun'omicidio c'era stato: della moglie non si parlava; e gli altri due eran morti improvvisamente, sì, ma di naturale morte' (1912 + 1, III, p. 345). Thus Sciascia's novels bear out the 'neri pensieri sui giornali appunto, sul giornalismo' which he expresses in the 1979 diary *Nero su nero*.⁶ In a very decisive entry, Sciascia condemns the uniformity of newspapers, and their reluctance to offer a judgment on issues. He rails that:

una indefinita paura sembra attanagliare i giornali. La paura di avere una linea, di assumere i fatti in un giudizio preciso. È come la paura di fare un giuoco di qualcuno o di qualcosa, di mettere in discussione quel che è pericoloso discutere, in pericolo quel po' di sicurezza cui ci si vuole aggrappare. E in realtà il maggior pericolo sta appunto in questo: nell'aver paura di un pericolo.⁷

Sciascia's texts criticise the way in which journalism is practised, the decisions that journalists (and of course editors) make. He attacks newspapers for failing to report the truth, and for refusing to engage with difficult, but important, issues.

Tabucchi's representation of journalism is very different, and his texts focus on the possibilities inherent in newspapers for effectuating change and for

⁵ *Porte aperte* appears in III, pp. 325-401.

⁶ *Nero su nero*, II, pp. 601-846 (p. 814)

⁷ *Nero su nero*, II, p. 814. Sciascia notes that smaller newspapers with a limited circulation do not suffer from this fear, but does not see the act of reading only these newspapers as a viable alternative.

engaging with and challenging society. This is particularly apparent in two texts; *Sostiene Pereira* (1994) and *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro* (1997).⁸ The notion of journalism is initially debated in *Sostiene Pereira* through conversations between Pereira and the young Monteiro Rossi, whom Pereira has commissioned to write advanced obituaries of famous writers, so that the newspaper has articles ready if the writers die suddenly. Rossi writes highly politicized obituaries of Marinetti, D'Annunzio, Lorca and Mayokovsy. Jennifer Burns rightly points out that these obituaries illustrate the way in which literature can be used for positive political ends (Lorca and Mayokovsy) and for negative political aims (D'Annunzio and Marinetti).⁹ It is also worth considering the political act inherent in writing the obituary itself, in using the article as a means of dialoguing with the political stance of the writer.

The political content of the obituaries prevents Pereira from publishing them although he does not discard them, instead filing them, perhaps realizing their significance. In the course of the text, Pereira changes from believing that writing and politics are mutually exclusive, to using a newspaper article to challenge the brutalities of Salazar's regime. Throughout the text, Pereira does not sign the articles he writes for the arts page of the *Lisboa*, initially feeling a certain shame in being both editor and contributor. When he begins to publish more controversial pieces, such as a translation of Balzac's *Honorine*, he does not put his name to the piece due to an unease about being associated with sentiments

⁸ Page references are to the following editions: Antonio Tabucchi, *Sostiene Pereira* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1998); Antonio Tabucchi, *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2002).

⁹ Jennifer Burns, *Fragments of Impegno: Interpretations of Commitment in Contemporary Italian Narrative 1980-2000* (Leeds: Northern Universities' Press, 2001), p. 75.

such as repentance; notions which do not sit well with the regime. Hence Pereira's decision to write (and to sign) an article denouncing the murder of the young revolutionary Monteiro Rossi represents a very deliberate and powerful political act. Throughout the article, Pereira stresses his authorship, taking responsibility for his writing:

'si chiamava Monteiro Rossi [...] Ieri sera, mentre cenava dal direttore della pagina culturale del 'Lisboa', il dottor Pereira *che scrive quest'articolo*, tre uomini armato hanno fatto irruzione nell'appartamento. Si sono qualificati come polizia politica, ma non hanno esibito nessun documento che avvalorasse la loro parola. Si tende a escludere che si trattasse di vera polizia, perché erano vestiti in borghese e perché si spera che la polizia del nostro paese non usi questi metodi [...] Mentre l'uomo magro e basso teneva sotto il tiro della pistola *chi scrive quest'articolo*, il Fonseca e il Lima hanno trascinato Monteiro Rossi in camera di letto per interrogarlo, secondo quanto loro stessi hanno dichiarato. *Chi scrive quest'articolo* ha udito colpi e gridi soffocati. Poi i due uomini hanno detto che il lavoro era fatto. I tre hanno rapidamente abbandonato l'appartamento *di chi scrive* minacciandolo di morte se avesse divulgato il fatto. *Chi scrive* si è recato in camera da letto e non ha potuto fare altro che constatare il decesso del giovane Monteiro Rossi [...] Invitiamo le autorità competenti a vigilare attentamente su questi episodi di violenze che alla loro ombra, e forse con la complicità di qualcuno, vengano perpetrati oggi in Portogallo'.

Pereira andò a capo e sotto, a destra, *mise il suo nome: Pereira. (Sostiene Pereira, pp. 202-203, my italics)*

Tabucchi's text portrays the possibilities inherent in journalism for striking a blow against a brutal regime. Pereira's article would no doubt play a crucial role in stirring the consciousness (and conscience) of its readers. Although Tabucchi's text does not dwell on the limitations of such an act, they are subtly present throughout the text. In the first instance, Pereira himself must flee Portugal; hence his brave stance is necessarily limited to a single act. Secondly, Pereira succeeds in publishing the article by tricking the censor, an old friend. It is not Pereira who will face the ramifications of his act, but rather an unsuspecting associate.

Thirdly, the reader is forced to consider the prolonged impact that an isolated article may have. Earlier in the text, the state of Portuguese journalism is made very clear, as Pereira admits that 'dai giornali portoghesi non si i riesce a sapere molto, le uniche novità che conosco sono le chiacchiere di caffè'.¹⁰ This is a criticism not so much of the written form of journalism, but rather of the regime which censors newspapers and limits the important freedoms of journalists. The contrast between Pereira's article and the other newspaper articles of the time permits Tabucchi to illustrate the potential and the limits, the powers and the vulnerabilities, of this kind of writing. The power of Pereira's article is immediate, but may be diminished by its isolation, as time will erase the memory of both its bravery and its content. The picture of journalism that emerges from *Sostiene Pereira* is certainly positive, but is not unequivocal.

The same is true of the 1997 text *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro*, which recounts the journalist Firmino's investigations into the murder and decapitation of the young Monteiro by Silva, a corrupt police officer whose drug consignment Monteiro attempted to steal.¹¹ In her reading of *La testa*, Burns argues that 'journalism is seen in the novel to be a source, custodian, and vehicle of truth: Tabucchi demonstrates none of the cynicism regarding the function and practice of the media which is pervasive in contemporary culture' (Burns, *Fragments*, p. 79). Burns is right to stress the value that the text places on journalism, although it is also important to acknowledge the caveats that

¹⁰ *Sostiene Pereira*, p. 145. Pereira has already told a waiter that 'dai giornali non si sa mai niente' (*Sostiene Pereira*, p. 79).

¹¹ It is interesting that the victim of police brutality in both texts has 'Monteiro' as part of his name.

Tabucchi places on his representation of newspaper writing. Certainly, the novel emphasizes the positive role that journalism can play in exposing scandals and in bringing justice: the newspaper for which Firmino works is tellingly called *O Acontecimento*, meaning 'That Which the Citizen Must Know'. It is through Firmino's enquiries (rather than through police investigations) that the story of police brutality and corruption that led to Damasceno's murder emerge. After Firmino's account of drug-selling in Silva's nightclub is published, the police are forced to investigate. Dona Rosa states that 'se non c'eravate voi giornalisti la polizia in quel locale non ci sarebbe mai andata, per fortuna c'è la stampa (*La testa*, p. 182). In bringing the scandal to the public eye, Firmino prevents the issue from being hushed up as an internal affair and quietly forgotten. Firmino's interview also plays a crucial role in protecting the witness Leonel Torres. After Torres has made his statement at the police station, he is interviewed by Firmino, to prevent Torres from 'disappearing'; Firmino is able to act as a 'giurato virtuale' (*La testa*, p. 122). The lawyer Loton tells Firmino that

se Torres, dopo aver fatto la sua deposizione alle autorità inquirenti, ribadisce tutto sul suo giornale, può stare tranquillo, perché avrà con sé tutta l'opinione pubblica, e un conducente distratto, per esempio, ci penserebbe due volte a investire con la macchina una persona che ha addosso gli occhi dell'opinione pubblica, capisci il concetto? (*La testa*, p. 121)

Indeed, it is only with the support of a newspaper that Torres will testify, and Firmino tellingly encourages him with the words 'fidati della stampa' (*La testa*, p. 103). The power of newspapers to communicate with a vast number of people is emphasized, as the special editions detailing the case frequently sell out.

However it is important to recognize that Tabucchi's glowing representation of journalism is confined to a very specific type of writing. When Firmino files his first report on Damasceno's murder, it is written in a very sensationalist style, playing on the emotions of the reader, as directed by his editor (*La testa*, pp. 89-93). Firmino distances himself from the article, telling Loton (who raises his eyebrows at the article) that 'non è esattamente il mio stile' (*La testa*, p. 93). In the article, Firmino creates a persona for the writer, describing himself as a fifty-year old (he is nearly thirty), in order to separate himself from his prose. At Silva's trial, Firmino observes that many of the major newspapers have not sent correspondents to the courtroom, relying on second-hand reports. This seems to question the accuracy of newspaper reporting, again signalling potential dangers inherent in the form. Tabucchi's text seems to suggest that journalism offers a great potential for communicating with a large readership, for effectuating real change and for giving a voice (and protection) to the dispossessed, but that journalism requires a very clear ethical stance.

This ethical stance is a mainstay of Tabucchi's own journalism. Flavia Brizio-Skov's analysis of Tabucchi's newspaper articles from 1996-1999 concludes that Tabucchi's own articles are similar to his depiction of journalism in fictional texts.¹² Such similarity is particularly evident in Tabucchi's article 'Garcia Lorca, il poeta assassinato' which appeared in *Corriere della sera* on 31 May 1998. Brizio-Skov sees the article, which remembers Lorca primarily as a victim of Franco, as reminiscent of the obituaries written by Monteiro Rossi in

¹² Flavia Brizio-Skov, *Antonio Tabucchi: Navigazioni in un arcipelago narrativo* (Cosenza: Pellegrini, 2002), pp. 187-95.

Sostiene Pereira.¹³ Tabucchi's newspaper articles engage with a wide range of issues, with the common denominator of asking the reader to assess and to react to events. His articles on the Iraq war ask the reader to re-read and to re-interpret the information provided to them by the Italian (and American) governments, stressing the importance of examining the context in which information is presented.¹⁴ He asks the reader to (re)consider her own behaviour and attitudes towards racial intolerance in his article 'Buttiglione, le donne, i gay. E poi?'.¹⁵ In this article Tabucchi examines the growth of racial intolerance, and more importantly, the acceptance of intolerance whereby it becomes acceptable to pronounce that 'io, personalmente sono razzista. [...] Non so cosa ne pensa', and reminds the reader that fifty years ago the acceptance of racial intolerance led to the extermination of six million people. Tabucchi's journalism, like that of his protagonists, requires an active response from the reader.

Thus although Sciascia and Tabucchi appear to represent journalism in different ways, both assert the need for journalism to engage with important issues and to be written in a serious and thoughtful way, eschewing sensationalism and inaccuracies. Sciascia certainly attacks the flaws in journalistic practice, but in doing so outlines by default the form that he believes journalism should take. It would be facile to suggest that Sciascia entirely rejects

¹³ Brizio-Skov, *Navigazioni*, p. 189. A similar comparison with Monteiro Rossi's obituaries could be drawn with Tabucchi's article 'Pessoa: Un poeta conto il dittatore Salazar', *Corriere della Sera*, 31 May 2001.

¹⁴ See for example Tabucchi's articles 'Il sacrificio del diritto', *Il manifesto*, 27 January 2001; 'Una stampa con le regole del bridge', *Il manifesto*, 9 February 2005.

¹⁵ Antonio Tabucchi, 'Buttiglione, le donne, i gay. E poi?', *L'unità*, 25 October 2004.

the medium, since he contributed to newspapers over many years.¹⁶ Sciascia does nominate an excellent level of journalism, illustrating the possibilities inherent in the form. In *Fatti diversi di storia letteraria e civile*, Sciascia writes that Longanesi's *Omnibus* constitutes:

il primo e impareggiato esempio di una stampa ebdomadaria che, aprendo credito all'intelligenza e al gusto del pubblico medio su cui si rivolgeva, veniva come a realizzare quel postulato della democrazia che trova definizione nella frase 'non io sono uguale a te, ma tu sei uguale a me'; e intendiamo con ciò dire, sottotendono preoccupazioni e penose constatazioni di oggi, di una carta stampata che non si abbassi e non abbassi, che contenga un che di durevole nell'effimero, che sia una scommessa col tempo.¹⁷

The notion of durability is an important one, and Ricorda stresses that Sciascia too seeks 'un che di durevole' in his journalistic prose (Ricorda, *Pagine vissute*, p. 194). Sciascia faced the ephemeral nature of journalism by re-publishing his articles as collections: the articles on Sicily were collected into *La corda pazza* (1970); articles on social, cultural and moral themes were collected into *Nero su nero* (1979), an almost public diary; his articles on the mafia and the anti-mafia movement form *A futura memoria (se il futuro ha una memoria)*.¹⁸ Ricorda draws upon the cover note of the first edition of *Nero su nero*, in which Sciascia wrote that 'fin dal momento in cui ho scritto la prima [nota], ho pensato a questo libro', to argue that Sciascia sought to use the book format to combat the fleeting nature of journalism (Ricorda, *Pagine vissute*, p. 196).

¹⁶ Joseph Farrell notes that Sciascia contributed to the Palermo daily *L'ora* for thirty years in *Leonardo Sciascia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 34. Ricciarda Ricorda examines Leonardo Sciascia's contributions to *Corriere della sera* between 1969-1972 and 1979-1989 in *Pagine vissute: Studi di letteratura italiana del Novecento* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1995), pp. 193-208.

¹⁷ *Fatti diversi di storia letteraria e civile*, III, pp. 515-727 (p. 628).

¹⁸ *La corda pazza* appears in I, pp. 959-1252; *A futura memoria (se il futuro ha una memoria)* appears in III, pp. 763-898. Sciascia's *Kermesse*, which he wrote for *Corriere della sera* between 1982-83 are collected in *Occhio di capra*, III, pp. 1-105.

The notion of the ephemeral functions on two levels in terms of newspaper publishing: the availability of the script and the issues with which it engages. A newspaper article has a fleeting life, especially in daily newspapers.¹⁹ Like Sciascia, Tabucchi illustrates his concern regarding the brevity of journalism, writing on the cover of *Piazza d'Italia* that 'questo libro è memoria, una lunga memoria che si oppone alla memoria breve dei mass media'.²⁰ Journalism also deals with specific issues, which quickly change. Tabucchi defines the difference between journalism and literature in an interview with *Il tempo*, in which he writes

lo scrittore vive immerso nella realtà ed è giusto che parli di quello che vive e vede, ma non deve farlo in modo diretto, perché questo è il compito del cronista. Lo scrittore, insomma, non deve restituire i fatti ma piuttosto la 'temperatura' di un'epoca'.²¹

Literature is able to deal with more abstract values than journalism; principals which may be applied to specific situations in any period, thus providing an engagement of lasting importance. In *Sostiene Pereira*, Pereira is inspired by the texts of Maupassant, Balzac and Daudet, drawing on the notions of repentance and courage to carry out his act of rebellion. *La testa* offers a more problematic representation of the value of literature, as Firmino's early studies (on the influence of Vittorini on the Portuguese post-war novel) are derided as irrelevant by Loton. Loton later comes to see the value of literary research, especially when

¹⁹ This element is now being challenged by the internet, on which newspaper articles are becoming easily traceable and available to a wide audience, even outside Italy. Feltrinelli for example emails articles written by Tabucchi, from any newspaper, to readers who have expressed an interest in Tabucchi's work on their website (www.feltrinelli.it).

²⁰ Antonio Tabucchi, *Piazza d'Italia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1998). The text was first published in 1975, then a second edition was published in 1993.

²¹ The interview, with *Il tempo*, 10 April, 1991, is cited in Bruno Ferraro, 'Antonio Tabucchi's Actors, Characters and Ghosts', *Spunti e ricerche*, 12 (1996/1997), 2-25 (p. 13).

Firmino commences a new project, on censorship. JoAnn Cannon suggests that the end of *La testa* 'reflects the sense that political activism and writing may be complementary activities, equally worthy of pursuit'.²² Perhaps the text more specifically suggests that literature and the study of literature can play an important role if written and read 'correctly'. The value of literature is also stressed in Sciascia's writing, notably in the texts which deride journalism. In *Porte aperte*, the *piccolo giudice* has a 'sete' to discuss literature, linking the study of literature to his ethical stance against fascism and against the death penalty (*Porte aperte*, III, p. 391). Meanwhile in *Il cavaliere e la morte*, the *Vice* retreats into the 'pagine amate' of literary texts to find refuge (and support) against his contemporary reality (*Il cavaliere*, III, p. 454). Tellingly he re-reads *Robinson Crusoe*, underscoring his solitude as an ethical man. For Sciascia, as for Tabucchi, literature has the power to offer important and timeless meanings.

This is not to say that literature cannot engage with specific issues: Sciascia and Tabucchi use their writing to engage with terrorism, the use of *pentiti* (and specific cases therein) and immigration. Tabucchi writes that:

the Italian and European reality has always captured my attention. I have spoken of fascism, of terrorism, of the 'pentiti' [...], of the judicial inquiries. But I have done this in my own way, that is, as a writer, one who interprets. In this respect literature distinguishes itself from journalism: it doesn't limit itself to reporting the facts; it lives them.²³

Thus when Tabucchi and Sciascia discuss specific issues through literature, their writing places these issues in wider contexts of justice, truth and reason. Sciascia

²² JoAnn Cannon, 'Detection, Activism and Writing: Antonio Tabucchi's *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro*', *Quaderni d'italianistica*, 23, 1 (2002), 163-72 (p. 172).

²³ Anna Botta, 'An Interview with Antonio Tabucchi Conducted by Anna Botta', *Contemporary Literature*, 35, 1 (Spring 1994), 421-440 (p. 439).

in particular stresses the privileged position of literature as 'la più assoluta forma che la verità possa assumere' (*Nero su nero*, II, p. 834). Sciascia often uses light imagery in his discussions of literature, writing that his text *L'affaire Moro* sought to 'portare in luce la verità' (*Nero su nero*, II, p. 836). In the same text Sciascia seeks to answer the question 'che cos'è la letteratura?', writing that:

forse è un sistema di 'oggetti eterni' (e uso con impertinenza questa espressione del professor Whitehead) che variamente, alternativamente, imprevedibilmente splendono, si eclissano, tornano a splendere e ad eclissarsi – e così via – alla luce della verità. Come dire: un sistema solare. (*Nero su nero*, II, p. 830)

Literature is able to receive the light of truth and so illuminate key issues for the reader.

Sciascia and Tabucchi acknowledge the value of journalism, but do not view it as more significant than the value of literature. Both are able to offer an important engagement in helping to shape the reader's perception of the contemporary world, although for Sciascia and Tabucchi, literature is able to offer a more permanent, less ephemeral, significance, in its engagement not just with fleeting phenomena, but also with lasting moral values.

5.2. Conclusion

For Sciascia and Tabucchi, literature offers a very real engagement with contemporary society. It is not a committed writing which seeks to offer answers, but one which insists on the need to question, to interrogate, to (re)assess. The literature that they produce demonstrates an awareness that answers may always prove elusive, but that the act of questioning is in itself important and significant. Belpoliti suggests that Sciascia's investigation into the Moro affair reveals that 'al suo interno resta sempre un centro vuoto, un'ombra che non può essere rischiarata', yet the very act of revealing such a shadow represents an illumination of the need to search for a truth.¹ In an interview with Antonio Borsari, Tabucchi asserts that 'a me è sempre piaciuta una letteratura interrogativa che, piuttosto che dare delle risposte, pone delle domande'.² Sciascia's belief that the reader must be proactive is beautifully illustrated in a short extract in *Nero su nero*.³ The text recounts the story of a prefect who loved Caravaggio, but who had never seen the Caravaggio painting that was in his town, as he had never made any investigations to find any painting, relying on what he was told (*Nero su nero*, II, pp. 615-17). Sciascia underlines the need for the reader to be active, to seek meanings and to interpret the texts (and the world) around her. Sciascia and Tabucchi have a very definite image of the reader for whom they are writing, which in Sciascia's view differentiates literature from journalism. He writes that 'i giornali italiani vengano fatti come se non dovessero

¹ Marco Belpoliti, *Settanta* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), p. 12.

² Antonio Borsari, 'Cos'è una vita se non viene raccontata? Conversazione con Antonio Tabucchi', *Italienisch: Zeitschrift für Italienische Sprache und Literatur*, 13, 2, 26 (November 1991), 2-23 (p. 8).

³ *Nero su Nero*, first published in 1979, appears in II, pp. 601-848.

essere letti – e cioè sul dato, o sul pregiudizio, o sull'inconscia credenza che il lettore non esiste' (*Nero su nero, II*, pp. 826-27). Sciascia and Tabucchi have a clear idea of their reader, who may be presented with difficult issues and questions. Tabucchi writes that 'I don't believe that literature has to console anyone'; a sentiment attested to by both his and Sciascia's texts.⁴

As the engagement which Sciascia and Tabucchi propose is one of questioning, of challenging official accounts and of actively seeking discrepancies, their commitment is not problematized or undermined by the notions of a de-centred truth or of the inability of language to fully communicate ideas. Such ideas further their belief that the reader should beware of 'morceaux choisis' and should look to contextualize the information she is presented with against other, different accounts, and to be aware of the limits (and motivations) behind narratives. The findings of chapter 3.1. of this thesis, 'Committed Literature in an Unstable World', suggest that whilst Sciascia and Tabucchi both embrace the possibilities afforded by notions of de-centred truth, for Tabucchi it represents a constant and valuable means of engagement to be privileged above other forms, whereas for Sciascia it constitutes a means of committed writing to be employed when reason and logic, his preferred tools, are found wanting. Sciascia returns, even within the scope of *L'affaire Moro* itself, to the model of rational enquiry as a means of engaging with the questions raised by the Moro kidnapping. This seems to have two implications for the way in which we read other texts of the same period (and indeed beyond). In the first instance, it

⁴ Anna Botta, 'An Interview with Antonio Tabucchi Conducted by Anna Botta', *Contemporary Literature*, 35, no. 1 (Spring 1994), 421-440 (p. 437).

signifies that the tools of reason and logic have not been rendered obsolete by a climate influenced by the scepticism of post-structuralism and post-modernism, and that they still offer a valuable contribution to the ways in which the reader (and writer) may conceptualize and engage with contemporary society. Sciascia's return to rational enquiry, even after employing other modes of investigation, suggests that such processes are by no means anachronistic. The second issue to emerge concerns Tabucchi's privileging of doctrines which challenge notions of truth and language. The way in which he elects them as his primary, preferred, means of engagement undermines the traditional dichotomy of texts concerned with so-called post-modernist issues and those which represent committed literature. This has implications not only for the way in which the reader approaches Tabucchi's own texts, but also suggests a wider vision of commitment when approaching other post-modern writers, both within the Italian literary debate and also further afield.

The same is true for the way in which the reader considers intertextuality in novels. Part 4 of this thesis, 'The Challenges of Intertextuality and Self-Reflexivity', demonstrates the ways in which Sciascia and Tabucchi employ intertextuality and self-reflexivity as valuable means of furthering their engagement. They stress the truths which may be found in literature, whilst also emphasizing their partial nature, and the need to shy away from overarching metanarratives; even those espoused by their preferred literary models. This mode of reading may (and indeed should) be employed not only when approaching literary texts, but also when reading society. Sciascia's and Tabucchi's uses of

intertextuality to further engagement are important in a number of ways. Firstly, it necessitates a re-reading of Sciascia's dialogue with other authors. Rather than focusing on echoes of other writers in his texts and on his opinions of other authors, it suggests that the modes of reading that Sciascia proposes, the lessons that reading may teach, should be privileged. Secondly, it undermines previous research which suggests that Tabucchi's dialogue with other writers is extraneous to his engagement (which, it has been suggested, is confined to certain key texts). Finally, it indicates that the reader should approach intertextuality in other writers' work in a more open way. The reader should seek to question whether the intertextual echoes in a work have a deeper resonance, a more profound sense.

Sciascia and Tabucchi seek to challenge not only official accounts but also prevailing ideologies and prejudices. Part 2 of this thesis, 'Engagement through Spatial Representations', examines the ways in which Sciascia challenges constructions of Sicily in the European context, and the ways in which he undermines the ideologies of Communism and Catholicism.⁵ Tabucchi's spatial representations are more directly influenced by issues of immigration, closer European integration and the new meaning of regionalism in the light of the success of the *Lega Nord*. Two key elements emerge from a study of Tabucchi's spatial depictions: in the first instance, Portuguese space comes to represent a theatre in which to play out Italian concerns over regional and national identity, and in the second, the portrayal of border spaces becomes influenced by issues of immigration. These two elements come together in

⁵ Sciascia defines Christianity and Communism as sources of hope in Leonardo Sciascia and Domenico Porzio, *Fuoco all'anima: Conversazione con Domenico Porzio* (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), p. 53.

Tabucchi's representation of Portuguese imperial spaces, which, whilst not fitting the remit of this thesis, would warrant further study. Like Tabucchi's depiction of border spaces, Portuguese imperial space undergoes a significant shift in his writing. In his early texts, representations of Portuguese Empire embody a romanticized and Eurocentric space, whereas later texts focus on the repression and brutality of Empire.⁶ Tabucchi's depictions of Portuguese imperial spaces offer a means of examining, I would suggest, Italy's colonial legacy; an issue which has recently come under closer scrutiny. I would suggest that a study of the representation of non-European spaces in Italian novels from the 1980s onwards would offer a valuable new way of considering the impact of factors such as immigration, European integration and a re-appraisal of Italy's colonial legacy on Italian identity. Important work is already being carried out on the representation of Italy by immigrant writers; and such a study would complement this work, examining a different face of the entwined issues.⁷ The texts of well-known writers such as Claudio Magris and Daniele Del Giudice would offer significant insights on the subject, as would the work of lesser known writers such as Sandro Onofri.⁸ A careful reading of such texts would offer a valuable perspective on the issues facing Italian identity.

⁶ Tabucchi examines Portugal's colonial legacy in a benevolent way in his 1984 text *Notturmo indiano* (Palermo: Sellerio, 2000), but in a more brutal fashion in his 1991 collection *L'angelo nero* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2002) and his 1997 novel *La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2002).

⁷ See for example Jennifer Burns, 'Recent Immigrant Writing in Italian: A Fragile Enterprise', *The Italianist*, 18 (1998), 213-44; Jennifer Burns, 'Borders within the text: authorship, collaboration and mediation in writing in Italian by immigrants', in J. Burns and L. Polezzi (eds), *Borderlines: Migrant Writing and Italian Identities (1870-2000)*, (Isernia: Iannone, 2003), pp. 387-212.

⁸ Possible texts for consideration include Daniele Del Giudice, *Atlante occidentale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1985); Claudio Magris, *Un altro mare* (Milan: Garzanti, 1991); Luigi Malerba,

The literature of Sciascia and Tabucchi offers important perspectives on a range of contemporary concerns. They seek to shed light on the murky proceedings of the *pentiti* trials, the Moro kidnapping, and the treatment of immigrants in Italy. Their writing does not just focus on specific issues, but also proposes strategies for reading texts (literary and non-literary, fictional and non-fictional); strategies for reading society. Indeed, Sciascia defines an 'intellettuale' as a person able to 'leggere la realtà'.⁹ For both Sciascia and Tabucchi, reading practices may offer a sustained and significant engagement with society, with a careful commitment from both the reader and the writer.

Viaggiatore sedentario (Milan: Rizzoli, 1993); Sandro Onofri, *Cose che succedono* (Turin: Einaudi, 2002), *Le magnifiche sorti: racconti di viaggio (e da fermo)* (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 1997), *Vite di reserve* (Rome: Theoria, 1993); Enrico Palandri, *Via del ritorno* (Milan: Bompiani, 1990)

⁹ *A futura memoria*, III, p. 809. *A futura memoria* appears in III, pp. 763-898.

Appendix

Appendix 1:

The Representation of space in Sciascia's texts

	fiction / saggistica	detective novels	historical novels
1956	Le Parrocchie di Regalpetra		
1957			
1958	La morte di Stalin		Il quarantotto
1959			
1960			
1961		Il giorno della civetta	
1962			
1963			Il Consiglio d'Egitto
1964			
1965			
1966		A ciascuno il suo	
1967			
1968			
1970			
1971		Il contesto	
1972			
1973			
1974		Todo modo	
1975			
1976			I pugnatori
1977	Candido		
1978			
1979			
1980			
1981			
1982			
1983	Cruciverba		
1984			
1985			
1986			1912 + 1
1987			Porte aperte
1988		Il cavaliere e la morte	
1989	Fatti diversi di storia letteraria e civile	Una storia semplice	

KEY

texts based in real space

texts based in conceptual space

texts using a balance of real and conceptual space

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