

Sciascia and Calvino, ... and Giufà

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Abstract

This essay traces the evolution of the personal and professional relationship of Italo Calvino and Leonardo Sciascia, using their divergent readings of the tales of the Sicilian folk hero Giufà as a yardstick for measuring their personal and professional association and their development as writers and thinkers. Thus, it sheds light on Italian literary culture as it took new form after WWII through the years of lead and the death of the two men in the 1980s; specifically, the two disagreed publicly as to how the Italian State should react to the terrorist threat posed by the Red Brigades in the late 1970s. Subsequent to these polemics Sciascia broke with Einaudi (the firm for whom Calvino, since the 1950s had edited most of Sciascia's books). Then, in 1989 (four years after Calvino's death in 1985), Sciascia, in perhaps the last essay he wrote, disagreed with Calvino's 1971 characterization of the Giufà as a trickster and village idiot, as a sort of societal antibody, someone communities need to expel in the interest of their well-being.

Key words – Italo Calvino; Leonardo Sciascia; Giufà; Years of Lead; Einaudi Publishing House; literary postmodernism

1. Introduction

While the critical bibliographies dealing with two of Italy's most important intellectuals over the second half of the twentieth century, Leonardo Sciascia (1921-1989) and Italo Calvino (1923-1985), are extensive, to say the least, the personal relationship and professional interactions of the two have not been examined. The purpose of this essay is to fill that gap, not only because their association constitutes an important chapter in Italy's intellectual history, but because it sheds light on their individual development as writers, and on the cultural divide sparked in Italy by the so-called years of (terrorist) lead, the late 1970s. Both men have been labeled postmodern writers: Calvino for writings that accentuate the ludic, artistic re-ordering of a limited number of basic elements of plot into a seemingly infinite number of stories; Sciascia for casting into doubt basic conceptions of truth, proposing that material reality can be known only indirectly, through narrations and interpretations (and interpretations of interpretations). Surprisingly, the Sicilian folk hero Giufà plays an important role in the interactions of the two men¹.

¹ For Giufà, see, below, section 4: Calvino and Giufà.

Calvino and Sciascia made each other's acquaintance after the War. In the early 1950s, Sciascia, in his capacity as editor of the a bi-monthly literary journal «Galleria», invited Elio Vittorini to publish in the journal. Calvino came into contact with Sciascia through Vittorini. In 1958 Sciascia's second book, *Gli zii di Sicilia*, was published in the experimental «Gettone» series edited by Vittorini for Einaudi. Calvino, an editor for Einaudi, a friend and collaborator of Vittorini, was given the assignment of editing this and all other titles written by Sciascia for Einaudi until Sciascia broke with that publisher in the late 1970s. Calvino diligently performed his task, pointing out the strong and weak points of manuscripts as they arrived.

Calvino transformed a number of Giufà tales into standard Italian for his 1956 edition of *Fiabe italiane*. Because of Calvino's expertise in this area, in 1971 Sciascia induced the owners of Sellerio publishing to invite Calvino² to write the introduction to a re-edition of the *Mimi siciliani*: rustic tales of pranks, chicanery, and infidelities, transformed into literary Italian from the dialect by Francesco Lanza³. They believed the book would help establish the Sicilian identity of Sellerio editore. They also felt the *Mimi* deserved the resonance it would gain from an introduction by a writer of Calvino's stature, and that Calvino's name on the cover of the volume would promote the volume of sales needed to put the house on a solid financial basis.

Calvino wrote the introduction. But Sciascia disagreed with Calvino's characterization of Giufà as a trickster and village idiot, an outcast and societal antibody, someone communities need to expel to preserve their well-being. Nonetheless, Sciascia maintained his silence for almost twenty years. In the interim the two men disagreed publicly over whether or not intellectuals needed to defend their country's democratic institutions in the face of a terrorist threat: during the trial of Red Brigade (Br) leaders in 1977, and then in the aftermath of the kidnapping of Aldo Moro and the assassination of Moro and his five bodyguards.

2. The 1940s

After the fall of Fascism, Calvino joined the clandestine Communist Party (Pci) and fought in the Resistance, as did his brother. They were encouraged to do so by their parents, both scientists and university professors. Subsequently, Calvino's parents were twice held hostage by the Germans, who demanded information on their sons' whereabouts. After the War Calvino confirmed his membership in the Pci (he was a frequent presence that Party's daily, *l'Unità*, and served, in the early 1950s, on its National Cultural Committee) and his commitment to the workers' movement. He left the Pci in 1957 (after the 1956 Soviet invasions of Poland and Hungary), while vowing to remain a «revolutionary» and a

² In 1969, the publisher's inaugural year, Calvino wrote (also on Sciascia's recommendation) the introduction to a re-edition of Serafino Amabile GUASTELLA, *Le parità e le storie morali dei nostri villani*, Palermo, Edizioni della Regione siciliana, 1969 [1884] (now in Italo CALVINO, *Saggi 1945-1985*. Tomo secondo, ed. Mario BARENGHI, Milano, Mondadori, 1995, pp. 1551-1565).

³ Caterina DE CAPRIO, «Sciascia, Giufà e *Il mare colore del vino*», «Il Giannone», 7.13-14 (2009), pp. 107-117, p. 111. The first edition of Lanza's *Mimi* was published in 1928 in Milan by Alpes. The re-edition, with Calvino's introduction was published by Esse (Sellerio) in 1971 and re-issued by Sellerio in 1984. I consulted the 2011 edition published by Armando Siciliano Editore. Calvino's introduction to Lanza can now be found in CALVINO, *Saggi*, pp. 1601-1610.

«communist»⁴.

The biographies of Calvino and Sciascia provide highly significant context to chapters in intellectual history (such as the present essay), because we cannot ignore, indeed, we must carefully evaluate the extent to which the socio-economic conditions of writers, especially during their youth, conditioned their later behavior, their political choices, the themes of their research and their development as thinkers. Social origin is much more than simple biographical information.

Sciascia's youth was very different from Calvino's, and not merely because he grew up in Sicily (Calvino came of age in a place – Liguria – where the war against Fascism and the German occupiers forced young Italian men to make a basic life choice), and therefore requires closer attention.

Sciascia's grandfather had worked his way up from sulphur-mine worker: with the help of a priest, he learned to read. This ability enabled him to become a squad leader, and later a mine administrator⁵. According to Leonardo's close childhood friend, the poet Stefano Vilardo, Sciascia's family was more affluent and cultured than those of his schoolmates⁶. Many of Sciascia's uncles were very well placed in local Fascist organizations⁷. So, when Sciascia first began to feel estranged from the Regime, in the 1940s, those inchoate feelings became aversion, and his family came to consider him «una specie di pecora nera»⁸.

In the 1940s⁹ «[c]on l'aiuto di G. C.» Sciascia would recall, «mi trovai [...] dall'altra parte»¹⁰, that is, among the locals who rejected Fascist rhetoric. «G.C.» was a school

⁴ Paolo SPRIANO, *Le passioni di un decennio (1946-1956)*, Milano, Garzanti, 1986, p. 25. For an analysis of Calvino's exit from the Pci, see Joseph FRANCESE, "Lo scrittore che non venne dal freddo. Il primo viaggio di Calvino negli Usa", «Allegoria», 37 (2001), pp. 38-61.

⁵ Matteo COLLURA, *Il maestro di Regalpetra: Vita di Leonardo Sciascia*, Milano, TEA Longanesi, 1996, p. 45.

⁶ Stefano VILARDO, *A scuola con Leonardo Sciascia. Conversazione con Antonio Motta*, Palermo, Sellerio, 2012, pp. 29-30, 49.

⁷ Leonardo SCIASCIA, "Leonardo Sciascia", in Ettore A. ALBERTONE (ed.), *La generazione degli anni difficili*, Bari, Laterza, 1962, pp. 259-262, p. 260. Indeed, when Sciascia was eight years old his father's brother-in-law, president of the local Opera Nazionale Balilla (an Ispettore dei Fasci, he was therefore ex officio member of the *Consiglio Nazionale* of the National Fascist Party), began garnering him special treatment. Leonardo went to the Saturday morning *adunate* «perché c'era il sorteggio dei giocattoli». They made him platoon leader, even though he acknowledged he was not competent, and gave him «una croce al merito. [...] Sempre perché c'era mio zio, si capisce». He also remembered that «[m]i faceva piacere che ci fosse mio zio con quella cintura dorata, la sciarpa azzurra e il pugnoletto. Mi risparmiava tante cose. Persino il premilitare mi poi risparmiato». Then, «[p]rotetto da mia zia, non andai più alle esercitazioni del sabato, non indossai più la divisa» (Leonardo SCIASCIA, "Memorie vicine", «Nuova corrente. Rivista di letteratura», 1.3 [June 1954], pp. 200-216, p. 203). In his own words, «[i]n Sicilia la famiglia, nelle sue vaste ramificazioni, ha questa funzione: di proteggere, di privilegiare i suoi membri rispetto ai doveri che la società e lo Stato impongono a tutti. È la prima radice della mafia, lo so bene. Ma per una volta ne ho approfittato anch'io» (COLLURA, *Il maestro di Regalpetra*, p. 64).

⁸ Leonardo SCIASCIA, *La palma va al nord: Articoli e interventi 1977-1980*, ed. Valter VECCELLIO, Milano, Gammalibri, 1982, p. 68.

⁹ Vilardo's memory does not always jibe with Sciascia's. For example, Vilardo recalls that «[f]u dopo, molto dopo il '37», that he and Sciascia made the acquaintance of Cortese (and of the Macaluso brothers): «[p]iù tardi, negli anni Quaranta» (VILARDO, *A scuola con Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 77). «L'incontro con Gino Cortese avvenne al chiosco di Giannone, dove si vendevano, oltre a invitanti, dissetanti bibite [...], anche riviste e giornali. Noi andavamo a comprarvi *L'Osservatore Romano*, l'unico giornale che non dava le notizie adulterate dal fanatismo imperante» (VILARDO, *A scuola con Leonardo Sciascia*, p. 79).

¹⁰ SCIASCIA, "Memorie vicine", p. 210.

mate, Gino Cortese (1921-1989)¹¹, a member of the clandestine Communist Party. While Sciascia was declared unfit for military service (due to his «torace insufficiente»¹²), Cortese was drafted into the cavalry¹³ and sent to Parma; he would desert and enter the partisan cause. After the War Cortese was a member of the Communist delegation at the Assemblée Regionale Siciliana (from 1947 to 1967) and served as provincial Secretary of the Communist Party in Caltanissetta and as *assessore* at the *Comune di Caltanissetta*¹⁴. Sciascia, as Emanuele Macaluso has clarified, interacted with Communists in the 1940s, but at no point asked to join the Party¹⁵. In 1941 Sciascia found employment in his hometown of Racalmuto at the government grain warehouse, where he would remain until 1948¹⁶. He married and began a family in 1944¹⁷.

Sciascia was also close to a founding member of the Party of Christian Democracy (Dc), Giuseppe Alessi¹⁸. In 1943, soon after the Allied landing in Sicily Alessi invited Sciascia to write for a local daily he edited for the Dc¹⁹. And immediately after the War Sciascia «collaborò per qualche anno alle terze pagine [...] del giornale *Sicilia del popolo*²⁰, the Dc's official newspaper in Sicily. It may, or may not, be the case that, because of this journalistic experience, Cortese accompanied Vittorio Nisticò – named editor of the Palermitan daily «L'Ora» by Amerigo Terenzi soon after its acquisition in 1954 by the Pci – to Racalmuto so that Sciascia might begin collaborating with that newspaper²¹. Sciascia's signature appeared for the first time in «L'Ora» 24 March 1955²², that is, at a time when Sciascia was a relatively unknown writer: *Cronache scolastiche* came forth in *Nuovi Argomenti* in early 1955; his first book, *Le parrocchie di Regalpetra*, in 1956.

Nisticò does not specify when his meeting with Sciascia occurred. However, it would seem that Sciascia's decision to collaborate with «L'Ora» was a tormented one²³.

¹¹ SCIASCIA, «Memorie vicine», p. 209.

¹² COLLURA, *Il maestro di Regalpetra*, pp. 75-76.

¹³ COLLURA, *Il maestro di Regalpetra*, pp. 105-106.

¹⁴ Cortese went on to teach philosophy at the University of Messina.

<<http://www.ars.sicilia.it/deputati/scheda.jsp?idLegis=2&idDeputato=169>>.

¹⁵ Emanuele MACALUSO, *Leonardo Sciascia e i comunisti*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 2010, p. 16.

¹⁶ In his own words, «mi avevano trovato del lavoro» SCIASCIA, «Memorie vicine», p. 215.

¹⁷ Claude AMBROISE, «Cronologia», in Leonardo SCIASCIA, *Opere: 1956-1971*, ed. Claude AMBROISE, Milano, Bompiani, 2004 [1987], pp. LI-LXX, p. LII.

¹⁸ VILARDO, *A scuola con Leonardo Sciascia*, pp. 40, 80. While correcting the proofs of this article, I read Domenico SCARPA, «La prova democristiana di Leonardo Sciascia. Una ricerca in corso», «Todomodo», 4 (2014), pp. 179-203, and plan to return to it in the future.

¹⁹ Alessi was a founding member of the Dc, first and third President of the Region Sicily, and MP from 1968 to 1972. After the War he edited the official organ of the Dc's provincial federation of Caltanissetta, «l'Unità», onto which he embedded his support of regional autonomy and firm opposition to Sicilian separatism (<http://xoomer.virgilio.it/lorenzobarone/intervista_a_giuseppe_alessi.html>).

²⁰ VILARDO, *A scuola con Leonardo Sciascia*, pp. 80-81.

²¹ On 28 January 1956 Laterza wrote to Sciascia telling of a visit to the publishing house in Bari by Piero Dallamano, an editor of the daily *Paese sera*. They discussed *Le parrocchie* and Dallamano told Laterza he planned to invite Sciascia to collaborate with the newspaper (Leonardo SCIASCIA, Vito LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra: Carteggio 1955-1988*, Roma-Bari, Editori Laterza, 2016, p. 43).

²² His debut piece was a review of Vittore FIORE, *Ero nato sui mari del tonno* (NISTICÒ, *Accadeva in Sicilia: Gli anni ruggenti dell'«Ora» di Palermo*, Palermo, Sellerio, 2001 pp. 44, 235), a reprint of what had already appeared in «Letteratura» (3.13-14 [January-April 1955], pp. 163-64).

²³ One factor, in addition to those set forth in this paragraph, was Leonardo's relationship with Salvatore Sciascia. In response to a 1953 letter from Mario La Cava (who wanted to review *Risposte di «Vie*

19 December 1954 Sciascia had warned his friend, the writer Mario La Cava, that collaboration with the Communist weekly «Il contemporaneo» «porta delle conseguenze»²⁴. Sciascia feared that since he was a school teacher («[l]egato al ‘pane del governo’, come qui si dice»²⁵) he would have «ragioni più evidenti di temere»²⁶. As late as 9 September 1956, Sciascia still had doubts. As he wrote to La Cava, «[f]orse nei primi di ottobre vado a Palermo, al giornale «L’Ora». Sono molto perplesso, ma credo andrò, almeno in prova. Non so se il mestiere fa per me, abituato come sono ad una vita tranquilla e a un lavoro molto libero»²⁷. Indeed, while «L’Ora» published an excerpt from the soon-to-be-published *Parrocchie* («Conversazioni a Regalpetra») on 29 February 1956, Sciascia’s collaboration began in earnest only in late 1957²⁸.

If I may take a step back in time, when Mussolini was deposed, «c’erano già gli americani»²⁹ in Racalmuto, to use Sciascia’s phrasing, and the ignominious end of the Regime, «ci apparve dunque una notizia lontana, quasi estranea, come se fosse venuta da un altro mondo»³⁰. In fact, in Racalmuto «[l]o sbarco degli americani è stato una kermesse [...]. Avevano creato una divisione, chiamata “Texas”, composta interamente da figli di siciliani. Sembrava una rimpatriata, una festa tra parenti. Parlavano siciliano»³¹.

When the «continental» government headed by Ferruccio Parri, Italy’s first after the Second World War (21 June-10 December 1945), «fece arrestare i separatisti siciliani» Sciascia, in his own words, discovered he was «essenzialmente siciliano» and «quella intrusione del potere romano mi ha precipitato in un atavismo siciliano. E non ne sono più uscito»³².

In 1945 Sciascia was already in contact «con un intraprendente suo omonimo, Salvatore Sciascia (1919-1986), fondatore della casa editrice che in quegli anni di speranze sarà una scialuppa su cui imbarcarsi per raggiungere le lontane spiagge della cultura»³³. As the hostilities of the Second World War were concluding, Salvatore

Nuove» ai lettori for «Galleria») Sciascia wrote: «[p]er l’inchiesta “Vie Nuove” sono perplesso. Per conto mio, direi che andrebbe benissimo. Ma tu sai che c’è gente che al solo sospetto d’un certo colore, s’infuria; e sai che questa gente dà sussidi alle riviste; e che il nostro Salvatore ci tiene a non perderli. Se vuoi, mandami dunque l’articolo ma non mi impegno a farlo uscire» (MARIO LA CAVA, LEONARDO SCIASCIA, *Lettere dal centro del mondo. 1951-1988*, ed. MILLY CURCIO, LUIGI TASSONI, SOVERIA MANNELLI, RUBETTINO, 2012, pp. 110, 112).

²⁴ Sciascia was wary, even though «L’Ora» – unlike «Il contemporaneo» – was not an official Pci publication. In fact, as Macaluso explains, «[c]on Nisticò il giornale diventò un centro autonomo di battaglia politica e culturale contro la conservazione e la mafia, per la modernizzazione dell’Isola, per aiutare tutte le forze che muovevano in questa direzione e trovare fra loro convergenze e collegamenti. Ho detto un centro autonomo. «L’Ora» non era considerato un giornale del Pci. Ci fu, tra il giornale e il partito, un rapporto dialettico e critico reale». Because of this, the daily could «esprimere interessi, idee, umori e cultura che sgorgavano dalla società nel suo complesso» (EMANUELE MACALUSO, *50 anni nel Pci*, SOVERIA MANNELLI, RUBETTINO, 2003, p. 115).

²⁵ LA CAVA, SCIASCIA, *Lettere dal centro del mondo*, p. 198.

²⁶ LA CAVA, SCIASCIA, *Lettere dal centro del mondo*, p. 198.

²⁷ LA CAVA, SCIASCIA, *Lettere dal centro del mondo*, p. 261.

²⁸ NISTICÒ, *Accadeva in Sicilia*, V. 1, p. 237. On 9 December 1959 he wrote to Laterza, saying that he had taken on the literary reviews for «L’Ora» (SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L’invenzione di Regalpetra*, p. 72).

²⁹ SCIASCIA, *La palma va al nord*, p. 133.

³⁰ SCIASCIA, *La palma va al nord*, p. 133.

³¹ SCIASCIA, *Fuoco all’anima: Conversazione con Domenico Porzio*, Milano, Mondadori, 1992, p. 33.

³² SCIASCIA, *La palma va al nord*, pp. 50-51.

³³ COLLURA, *Il maestro di Regalpetra*, p. 122.

initiated a number of «illuminate iniziative imprenditoriali»³⁴, one of which was an entrance into publishing.

In addition to a bookstore and a number of monograph series, in August 1949 Salvatore Sciascia – who was active in the Rotary (he was widely known in Caltanissetta as “Il Commendatore”³⁵) – financed the journal *Galleria* as part of a strategy designed to «far meglio risaltare l’isolamento di Caltanissetta» and to «gettar ponti e di stringere da lontano alleanze...»³⁶. He made Leonardo editor-in-chief in August 1950, at the inception of the periodical’s second year³⁷. *Galleria* enabled Leonardo to put himself in contact with the *fior fiore* of Italian culture. Indeed, it positioned him to organize a conference (held in November 1953), sponsored in full by Sicily’s *Assessorato alla Pubblica Istruzione*³⁸. Among the attendees was the relatively unknown Pasolini³⁹, along with established figures such as Vittorini⁴⁰, and Mario La Cava⁴¹.

³⁴ Sergio MANGIAVILLANO, “Salvatore Sciascia editore in Caltanissetta”, «Incontri: Rivista del Rotary Club di Caltanissetta», (Luglio 2011), pp. 38-41, p. 38.

³⁵ Archivio Storico Distrettuale “Ferruccio Vignola” And Fondazione Culturale “Salvatore Sciascia”, *Salvatore Sciascia: l’uomo, l’editore, il rotariano*, Caltanissetta, Rotary International, Distretto 2110 - Sicilia-Malta, 2011, p. 15.

³⁶ MANGIAVILLANO, “Salvatore Sciascia editore in Caltanissetta”, p. 39.

³⁷ In this capacity, and through Leonardo, Salvatore sponsored an array of writers. See, for example, Pasolini’s letter of 19 March 1953 to Leonardo, thanking him for the 3000 lire paid by Sciascia editore for a short story that appeared in «Galleria» (Pier Paolo PASOLINI, *Lettere: 1940-1954*, ed. Nico NALDINI, Torino, Einaudi, 1986, p. 551).

³⁸ LA CAVA, SCIASCIA, *Lettere dal centro del mondo*, p. 104 e LA CAVA, “Letterati a convegno”, «Il Mondo», 15 December 1953, p. 11.

³⁹ PASOLINI, *Lettere*, p. 594. After the conference (30 November 1953), Pasolini asked Sciascia to thank the *assessore*, Pietro Castiglia, for the opportunity to participate (PASOLINI, *Lettere*, p. 619). The *giunta* in which Castiglia served included two *assessori* from the *liberal-democratico qualunquista* group (one of whom was Castiglia), in addition to a Social Democrat, an Independent and a substitute *assessore* chosen from the ranks of the Republicans (Romolo MENIGHETTI, Franco NICASTRO, *Franco Restivo. Vicerè della Sicilia autonoma, 1945-1955*, Palermo, ILA Palma, 2010, p. 67). The *giunta* was led by the second President of the Regione Siciliana, the Dc Franco Restivo and an acquaintance of Salvatore Sciascia (MANGIAVILLANO, “Salvatore Sciascia editore in Caltanissetta”, p. 41). Castiglia had served in Italy’s Constitutional Assembly, representing the Fronte liberale democratico dell’uomo qualunque, and, consequent to the merger of the Assembly’s far-right-wing parties, spent the final two months of his term as a member of the Unione Nazionale group (<<http://storia.camera.it/deputato/pietro-castiglia-19020509/gruppi#nav>> [28 July 2018]). He was also elected to the first three legislatures of the Assemblea Regionale Siciliana. During the first legislature (1948-1951) he was a member of the Blocco liberale democratico qualunquista. He was elected to the second and third legislatures (1951-1955 and 1955-1959) in the list of the Partito Nazionale Monarchico; on 20 July 1951 was sworn in as the *Assessore Regionale alla Pubblica Istruzione* (<<http://www.ars.sicilia.it/deputati/scheda.jsp?idDeputato=159>>). Restivo’s career took him from Palermo to the National Parliament. He was Minister of the Interior from 1968 to 1972.

⁴⁰ Elio VITTORINI, *Lettere: 1952-1955*, ed. Edoardo ESPOSITO, Carlo MINOLA, Torino, Einaudi, 2006, pp. 103, 108-109, 115.

⁴¹ LA CAVA, SCIASCIA, *Lettere dal centro del mondo*, pp.103, 105, 107. In April 1952 Sciascia mentioned to La Cava the possibility of contributing to a periodical edited and financed by Sicily’s *Assessorato alla Pubblica Istruzione*: «la rivista», he wrote, «disponde di fondi che oggi sembrano addirittura favolosi», and, it seems, paid handsomely contributors to the journal. As for the funding of «Galleria», in June 1952 Sciascia told La Cava how «[q]uesta rassegna, per mancanza di linfa finanziaria, subi lo scorso anno un arresto: e già ci rassegnavamo a considerarla morta, quando non so da che Commissione pervenne all’editore un sussidio tale che ne assicura la continuità» (LA CAVA, SCIASCIA, *Lettere dal centro del mondo*, pp. 22, 26, 29, 112).

In 1952 Leonardo asked Vittorini if he would like to publish a sample of his work in the periodical, and Vittorini happily accepted⁴². Soon thereafter, in the issue of Spring 1953, a chapter of *Le città del mondo* appeared in «Galleria». Consequently (27 November 1954), Sciascia wrote to Vittorini, asking if his manuscript, *Le parrocchie di Regalpetra*, could be «gettonato»⁴³, that is, published in the *Gettoni* series of experimental prose edited by Vittorini for Einaudi⁴⁴.

Unbeknown to Vittorini – it would seem, and on Calvino’s recommendation⁴⁵ - a chapter of *Le parrocchie, Cronache scolastiche*, appeared in the January-February 1955 issue of an important literary review edited by Alberto Carocci and Alberto Moravia, *Nuovi Argomenti*. *Le parrocchie* was published by Laterza in 1956; but Sciascia’s second book, *Gli zii di Sicilia*, was «gettonato»⁴⁶ in 1958. Once Sciascia entered the Einaudi stable Calvino became his first reader and editor.

3. Calvino editore di Sciascia

Calvino was «una delle prime persone a leggere quasi tutti i libri di Sciascia»⁴⁷. Calvino reviewed Sciascia’s manuscripts not only «come lettore della casa editrice Einaudi»⁴⁸, but also «come amico»⁴⁹. And Calvino did, in fact, treat Sciascia as one would a good friend; responding to each submission with frank and sincere critiques, which he folded into responses that were for the most part positive. In other words, Calvino saw no need, after reading the manuscripts, to avoid giving Sciascia, as Calvino himself phrased it, «qualche boccone amaro in ogni lettera»⁵⁰.

In fact, a sort of refrain emanates from Calvino’s missives to Sciascia. Each of them contains a subtle but firm acknowledgement of Sciascia’s reluctance to hone his work, to give attention to form equal to that afforded to content. For example, on 22 August 1956, less than three months after the publication of Kruscev’s so-called secret report, and less than two months after the Soviet suppression of the workers’ uprising in Poznań, Sciascia sent Calvino the manuscript of his brief narrative *La morte di Stalin*. Calvino found that Sciascia had put too much emphasis on «la cronaca degli avvenimenti storici, il resoconto di quel che pubblicano i giornali, senza abbastanza controparte di narrazione»⁵¹). He believed that if Sciascia were to «lavorarci ancora, potrebbe dire molto di più. Così è piuttosto superficiale, con un sospetto di facilità»⁵².

⁴² VITTORINI, *Lettere*, p. 52 and VITTORINI, “Le città del mondo” (Frammento di Romanzo), «Galleria», 3.3 (January 1953), pp. 20-24.

⁴³ VITTORINI, *Lettere*, p. 260.

⁴⁴ VITTORINI, *Lettere*, p. 260, n. 3.

⁴⁵ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 417.

⁴⁶ VITTORINI, *Lettere*, p. 260.

⁴⁷ Italo CALVINO, “Lettere di Italo Calvino a Leonardo Sciascia”, «Forum Italicum», 15.1 (1981), pp. 62-72, p. 62.

⁴⁸ CALVINO, “Lettere di Italo Calvino a Leonardo Sciascia”, p. 62.

⁴⁹ As Calvino wrote in 1981, while re-reading his letters to Sciascia, «[a] vederle tutte insieme scopro che ho scritto quasi un «tutto Sciascia [...] mi trovo di fronte come a un mio diario che si svolge attraverso il confronto con l’opera di uno scrittore amico» (CALVINO, “Lettere di Italo Calvino a Leonardo Sciascia”, p. 62).

⁵⁰ Italo CALVINO, *Lettere 1940-1985*, ed. Luca BARANELLI, Milano, Mondadori, 2000, p. 897.

⁵¹ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 464.

⁵² CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 464.

But Sciascia did not return to the manuscript. Rather, he published it, untouched, the following January in the journal *Tempo presente*, prior to including it in *Gli zii di Sicilia*.

Of the brief narrative *Il quarantotto*, another chapter of that volume, Calvino made himself very clear: «nel racconto non c'è altro che [roba storica]»⁵³. Indeed, he continued,

vuoi scrivere un racconto storico così e così; e ci riesci perché hai un ottimo «mestiere» e una gran limpidezza di segno; e te la cavi anche nella parte garibaldina un po' affrettata e sbrigativa. Ma di nuovo, di vero, di sofferto, di faticoso, di non-del-tutto-chiaro-nemmeno-a-te-stesso cosa dici? L'idea dei due tipi di siciliani è solo detta, non è rappresentata: e ci sarebbe da cavarne fuori molto. Ho un po' paura che tu ti lasci prendere dalla tua facilità di mettere insieme racconti ben fatti o che per una tua eccessiva modestia ti limiti a camminare sul battuto⁵⁴.

Calvino was convinced that if Sciascia could find the courage to look both around and inside himself, as Calvino believed Sciascia had done in *Cronache scolastiche*, he could «darci altre cose di quella forza»⁵⁵ and not mere «pezzi di costume»⁵⁶. But this suggestion went unheeded.

As for *Il giorno della civetta*, Calvino told Sciascia that, at the text's conclusion, «diventa quasi una nuda istruttoria»⁵⁷ and, therefore, «un po' perde vivezza»⁵⁸. He found in *Il Consiglio d'Egitto* a «[g]ravissima stonatura»⁵⁹: a lack of coherence and harmony that Calvino believed risked making the book seem «casuale, giornalistica»⁶⁰ and advised Sciascia to remove «queste immagini moderne [...] che abbassano il livello della tua prosa, sempre sorvegliata»⁶¹. Left unresolved in *L'onorevole* (written in one week's time⁶²) is the problem of giving «vitalità poetica»⁶³ to «elementi [...] solo enunciati»⁶⁴. Again Calvino urged Sciascia to «finalmente vedere in faccia il tuo demone, sentire la sua vera voce»⁶⁵.

While Calvino's appraisal of *Il contesto* was also substantially positive⁶⁶, he found that in *Todo modo* Sciascia violated «una delle prime regole del genere poliziesco»: ⁶⁷ Sciascia failed to reveal at the appropriate time important «elementi al lettore», ⁶⁸ the clues necessary to solve the enigma are nowhere to be found. Regarding *A ciascuno il suo*, Calvino felt it was a «una divertente variazione su un tema di cui ormai mi sembra

⁵³ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 517.

⁵⁴ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 517.

⁵⁵ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 517.

⁵⁶ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 517.

⁵⁷ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 666.

⁵⁸ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 666.

⁵⁹ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 713.

⁶⁰ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 713.

⁶¹ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 713.

⁶² COLLURA, *Il maestro di Regalpetra*, p. 191.

⁶³ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 82.

⁶⁴ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 82.

⁶⁵ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 829.

⁶⁶ CALVINO, *Lettere*, pp. 1110-13.

⁶⁷ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 1255.

⁶⁸ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 1255.

di sapere già tutto, assolutamente tutto»⁶⁹. After proffering this «boccone amaro»⁷⁰, Calvino wrote: «attendo la tua vendetta»⁷¹.

Sciascia responded to this «frecciata»⁷² with an allusion to his own «inquietudine e insoddisfazione»⁷³ (which he attributed to writing from, of, and for a Region that «intorno mi si va facendo il deserto»⁷⁴: a Region that «nella sua realtà» was «dead»⁷⁵). He said he appreciated Calvino's critique of *Il giorno della civetta*, and concluded: «[i]l tuo giudizio e quello dei lettori che continuano a comprare i miei libri, coincidendo con il giudizio del cardinal Federico con i pareri di Perpetua, sono quelli di cui veramente mi importa»⁷⁶. In other words, Sciascia's public (to use his term, "Perpetua"), who for the most part are not intellectuals of the stature of Calvino or Sciascia ("cardinal Federico"), are elevated by Calvino's decision to publish Sciascia's works. It follows that Sciascia's readers can be elevated because they can buy his books, despite the works' artistic limitations; and readers can buy his books because Einaudi publishes them (accepting them, beginning with *Il giorno della civetta*, «a scatola chiusa»⁷⁷, to use Sciascia's phrasing); and Einaudi publishes them not because they are great literature but because they sell. Thus, Sciascia's response is a subtle, highly literate, and ironic⁷⁸.

3.1. Laterza

It might seem from the correspondence between Sciascia and Laterza, that Sciascia would have been happier had he not found himself bound by contract to Einaudi. Laterza, as publisher of *Le parrocchie*, promoted Sciascia's work (the writer was angered that *Gli zii* was not listed among Einaudi's «novità»⁷⁹ for August 1958); and Laterza put Sciascia in contact with other venues, writers, and intellectuals. Moreover, Laterza – unlike Calvino – flattered Sciascia (of *Gli zii di Sicilia*; for example, Laterza wrote: «ho finito da pochi giorni la lettura del Suo ultimo libro, quasi centellinando le Sue pagine che raggiungono spesso una rara bellezza e che sempre sono impostate col Suo originale linguaggio che prediligo particolarmente»⁸⁰). But Sciascia was bound by

⁶⁹ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 897.

⁷⁰ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 897.

⁷¹ It may have been the case that Calvino was expecting a vendetta similar to Sciascia's review of *Il barone rampante*, which follows the structure of Calvino's letters to Sciascia. In the conclusion to a substantially positive piece Sciascia notes «qualche elemento non perfettamente fuso». He attributes this to the fact that «è stato scritto d'impeto (le date: dal 10 dicembre 1956 al 26 febbraio 1957), con felice furore» (Leonardo SCIASCIA, "Review of Italo Calvino, *Il barone rampante*", «Il Ponte», 13.12 [1957], pp. 1880-1882, p. 1882). Calvino, Sciascia proposes, was a «uomo offeso nella ragione» – by, we can surmise, recent events in Eastern Europe and their aftermath in Italy – who had shifted «la sua protesta sul piano della fantasia» (SCIASCIA, "Review", p. 1882).

⁷² Leonardo SCIASCIA, "Caro Calvino, non sono solido come credi", «La Stampa-Tuttolibri», 15.679 (25 November 1989), p. 1.

⁷³ SCIASCIA, "Caro Calvino", p. 1.

⁷⁴ SCIASCIA, "Caro Calvino", p. 1.

⁷⁵ SCIASCIA, "Caro Calvino", p. 1.

⁷⁶ SCIASCIA, "Caro Calvino", p. 1.

⁷⁷ SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, p. 79.

⁷⁸ For irony, see note 131, below.

⁷⁹ SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, p. 65.

⁸⁰ SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, p. 78.

contract to publish with Einaudi «due opere “a carattere narrativo”» after *Gli zii*⁸¹. This explains why he wrote to Laterza claiming he had asked Calvino to block the re-edition of *Gli zii*: had Calvino agreed, Sciascia would have been free to publish elsewhere⁸².

So Sciascia – on 25 June 1959, while working on *Il giorno della civetta* – wrote to Calvino telling of his displeasure with how Einaudi had handled *Gli zii*, and asking if Calvino, once the work-in-progress was completed, would provide a much-appreciated appraisal, but

non per l'eventuale pubblicazione. Con tutta franchezza (e spero me la permetterai in nome dell'amicizia), ti confesso che il mio editore ideale è Vito Laterza: non solo perché paga i diritti con puntualità e scrupolo (cosa di cui non mi importa molto), ma perché diffonde il libro come meglio non si potrebbe⁸³.

Sciascia had to be pleased that Laterza had accepted for publication (on 25 May 1959) *Il giorno della civetta* prior to its completion, indeed, without having seen the manuscript⁸⁴. Sciascia also enjoyed dealing directly with Laterza, whom Sciascia told how bureaucracy made dialogue with Giulio Einaudi impossible⁸⁵.

Vito Laterza, as De Mauro stresses, needed to rebuild his publishing house after the death in 1952 of Benedetto Croce, «per più di mezzo secolo nune tutelare indiscusso di Laterza»,⁸⁶ and therefore approached Sciascia's work from a different vantage than Calvino: the standards and criteria for evaluation of the two men were different. The publisher Laterza was looking to build a stable of writers for a house in dire need of establishing new contacts⁸⁷ whose books would sell (and so Laterza's many comments on the structure of *Le parrocchie* were, according to Laterza himself, «non di merito, ma di carattere esclusivamente editoriale»⁸⁸. This was precisely the sort of help, that of giving his writings form, Sciascia desired⁸⁹). Unlike Laterza, Calvino was an author who read looking primarily at the quality and longevity of the writing: in a word, its merits. This is why in his capacity as editor he dispensed *frecciate* and *bocconi amari*⁹⁰.

⁸¹ Paolo SQUILLACIOTTI, “Storia di un'autocensura: La vicenda redazionale de *Il giorno della civetta*”, «Todomodò», 2 (2012), pp. 23-36, p. 25. This explains why *Morte dell'Inquisitore* could come forth with Laterza in 1964, after *Il giorno della civetta* and *Il Consiglio d'Egitto*, and before *L'onorevole* and *A ciascuno il suo*, which were published by Einaudi, in 1961, 1963, 1965, and 1966.

⁸² SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, p. 70. In that same letter, dated 5 July 1959, he told Laterza that he was «intestardito a lasciare - a costo di non pubblicare niente per altri sette anni (dico per dire)» (SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, p. 70). Then, on 23 December 1959 he vowed to «sganciar[si]» from Einaudi, «anche a rischio di non pubblicare più un libro» (SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, p. 76).

⁸³ SQUILLACIOTTI, “Storia di un'autocensura”, p. 28.

⁸⁴ SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, p. 68.

⁸⁵ «Einaudi è invece irraggiungibile, dietro le sue barriere burocratiche (e di burocrazia che non ha nemmeno il merito di essere ordinata): e Lei può immaginare quanto ciò sia irritante per un meridionale come me, abituato a risolvere tutto nel rapporto personale, di amicizia» (SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, p. 108).

⁸⁶ Tullio DE MAURO, “Introduzione”, in SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, pp. V-XVIII, p. VI.

⁸⁷ DE MAURO, “Introduzione”, p. VI.

⁸⁸ SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, p. 9.

⁸⁹ 4 February 1964 Sciascia wrote to Laterza: «io ricordo sempre quanto Lei mi abbia aiutato per *Le parrocchie*: a scriverle, a darle forma». SCIASCIA-LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, pp. 107-108.

⁹⁰ CALVINO, *Lettere*, p. 897.

Calvino responded almost immediately to the letter in which Sciascia says that Laterza was his «editore ideale»⁹¹: on 30 June Calvino wrote to Sciascia expressing the wish that the latter's new novel be published by Einaudi, and promising that the new work «appena letto e approvato da me [...] passerà direttamente in tipografia. E uscirà nei Coralli con tutti gli onori»⁹².

In other words, in this exchange Sciascia – his personal relationship with Calvino (and Laterza) aside – proves himself, at a very early stage of his career, a shrewd negotiator, one who knew how to set two competing publishers against each other for his own advantage⁹³.

4. Calvino and Giufà

In the early 1950s Giulio Einaudi assigned Calvino the task of preparing a volume of Italian folk tales⁹⁴. Calvino accepted willingly because the task afforded him the opportunity to contribute to the preservation of the oral tradition; to that end he gathered, selected, and rewrote what he considered the most beautiful and representative fables from each of Italy's regions. He also gave himself two diverse but converging goals: reach the broadest possible audience of non-specialists while respecting «tutti i crismi della ricerca folcloristica italiana»⁹⁵. As part of this process he translated forty-four Sicilian tales into standard Italian, the last of which is a composite of ten Giufà stories.

Juhā⁹⁶ (as he is known in the Arab world) – in all likelihood an expression of an oral tradition before he appeared in an Arabic book printed in the ninth century – is known throughout the Mediterranean⁹⁷. In Sicily he is called Giufà. Giufà is a pre-pubescent boy⁹⁸, and something of a village idiot (but it must be clarified straight away that while he often behaves like a simpleton, he is more accurately described as a *stolto astuto* [a person of low intelligence, who does not grasp linguistic nuance, but who can be shrewd when basic self-interest – easy money, free food, avoiding work – is in play]). He arrived in

⁹¹ Quoted in SQUILLACIOTI, «Storia di un'autocensura», p. 28.

⁹² Quoted in SQUILLACIOTI, «Storia di un'autocensura», p. 28.

⁹³ As Squillacioti notes, «[I]e rassicurazioni di Calvino sembrano accontentare Sciascia [...] Ma nel contempo, mantiene vivo l'altro canale editoriale» (SQUILLACIOTI, «Storia di un'autocensura», p. 29). Einaudi, of course, published *Il giorno della civetta*; «fortunatamente» for Sciascia, Squillacioti adds, because «Laterza non aveva neanche all'epoca una collana di narrativa» (SQUILLACIOTI, «Storia di un'autocensura», p. 29).

⁹⁴ Mario LAVAGETTO, «Prefazione», in Italo CALVINO, *Fiabe italiane*, Milano, Mondadori, 2005 [1993], pp. XI-XLVII, pp. XI-XII.

⁹⁵ LAVAGETTO, «Prefazione», p. X.

⁹⁶ This spelling complies with the transliteration system of the «International Journal of Middle East Studies» for Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. In the Italian texts I have consulted, Giufà's Arabic name is spelled Ġuhā.

⁹⁷ The fame of Juhā has endured over the centuries over a very extended geographic area. The Arabic Juhā is something of a paradox; often he is described as «a wise old fool» (AA.VV., «Juha, The Middle East's heroic everyman», «The Economist» (15 August 2017) <<https://www.economist.com/prospero/2017/08/15/juha-the-middle-east-heroes-heroic-everyman>>). He is an adult man, in some stories he is married; in one he has a daughter. In some stories his advice is sought; in others, he is a fool, a cuckold, an object of derision. In Tuscany, he is known as Giucca; in Turkey, Nasreddin Hoca. According to the writer Luigi Malerba, Hoca is also known in Bulgaria where he is «destinato a essere vittima di beffe svariatissime» (Luigi MALERBA, *Strategie del comico*, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2018, p. 91).

⁹⁸ Since Giufà is very young, he is unmarried; so, as stupid as he may be, unlike his Arabic counterpart, he cannot be cuckolded. This lack of a sexual dimension distinguishes the Giufà stories from their Arabic, Turkish, and Tuscan counterparts. I venture that we may legitimately glean a sexual dimension from Lanza's *Mimi*, which are replete with the travails of sundry *cornuti e gabbati*, *cornuti e contenti*, and *cornuti e mazziati*.

Sicily in the ninth century with the Arab conquest. The plots of the tales involving him are generally a bit lengthier and more complicated than those involving Juhā, whose stories often resolve themselves in a witty remark. In almost all the tales Giufà lives alone at home with his widowed mother, who keeps eviction and starvation at bay, and who often must save her son from punishment for his self-destructive behavior.

Giufà was introduced into the Italian literary tradition in the first decades following the Unification of Italy by Laura Gonzenbach (1842-1878), a polyglot member of Messina's Swiss-German community and by Giuseppe Pitrè (1841-1916), a Palermitan physician. Gonzenbach interviewed working-class women living in coastal towns in the northeast of Sicily. She translated what was told her in the local dialect into German, then published her collection in Leipzig a few years before Pitrè came forth with a collection of tales gathered during his travels to the far corners of the Island⁹⁹.

Pitrè is universally credited for his success, as Zipes writes, in «restor[ing] the significance of oral literature» through his «renditions of the spoken word»¹⁰⁰, and, according to Lo Nigro, for transcriptions noted for their «assoluta fedeltà alla forma originale del dettato popolare»¹⁰¹. As Calvino himself phrased it, «il piacere a leggere Pitrè» in the original Sicilian dialect, consists «soprattutto nella ricchezza della lingua vernacola, nei modi di dire, nei proverbi, nelle invenzioni espressive inaspettate»¹⁰².

This is why Calvino, while working on the Sicilian tales chosen for inclusion in his edition of *Le fiabe italiane*, drew heavily from Pitrè. Calvino – in the early 1950s a relatively young writer in a literary environment still influenced by neorealism, a movement in turn conditioned by the Gramscian concept of national-popular – accepted the challenge of gathering and transcribing a selection of the country's folktales into Italian from the peninsula's many dialects because it offered him an opportunity to hone his craft while developing strategies of narrative realism. Work on the *Fiabe* allowed him to deal first-hand with the language and cadences of the popular strata, their life situations, their ways of thinking. From them he culled realistic forms of expression and behaviors of those who found themselves in desolate, real-life situations.

Pitrè provided a model because he knew how to «renderci il tono parlato, il caratteristico stile narrativo»¹⁰³ of those he interviewed. In fact, Calvino considered Pitrè's *Fiabe* (along with Nerucci's collection of Tuscan tales) one of the «due raccolte [di fiabe] più belle che l'Italia possiede»¹⁰⁴ because both «hanno uno "stile"»¹⁰⁵. He found Pitrè's collection «un *optimum* di possibile restituzione sulla carta di quella particolare e labile arte che è il raccontare a voce»¹⁰⁶ because it enables us to discard «l'astratta idea del "popolo" raccontatore»¹⁰⁷ and presents the reader with

⁹⁹ Laura RUBINI, "Introduzione", in Laura GONZENBACH, *Fiabe Siciliane*, ed. Luisa Rubini, transl. by Luisa Rubini and Vincenzo Consolo, Roma, Donzelli, 1999, pp. XV-XIX, p. XIX.

¹⁰⁰ Jack ZIPES, "The indomitable Giuseppe Pitrè", «Folklore», 120 (April 2009), pp. 1-18, pp. 4, 6.

¹⁰¹ Sebastiano LO NIGRO, *Racconti popolari siciliani. Classificazione e bibliografia*, Firenze, Olschki, 1957, p. XVI.

¹⁰² CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 1630.

¹⁰³ Italo CALVINO, "Introduzione (1956)", in ID., *Fiabe italiane*, Milano, Mondadori, 2005 [1993], pp. 3-55, p. 32.

¹⁰⁴ CALVINO, "Introduzione", p. 22.

¹⁰⁵ CALVINO, "Introduzione", p. 33.

¹⁰⁶ CALVINO, "Introduzione", pp. 22-23.

¹⁰⁷ CALVINO, "Introduzione", pp. 22-23.

personalità di narratori e narratrici ben distinte, segnate quasi sempre con nome e cognome, età e mestiere, di modo che possiamo, sul calco delle storie senza tempo né volto, di tra il grezzo anonimo parlato dialettale, scavar fuori qualche scoperta o sia pur qualche accenno d'un mondo d'immaginazione più sofferto, d'un ritmo interiore, una passione, una speranza che s'esprimano attraverso quest'attitudine a favoleggiare¹⁰⁸.

Through Pitrè's *narratori* and *narratrici* «si mutua», to use Calvino's own words, «il sempre rinnovato legame della fiaba atemporale col mondo dei suoi ascoltatori, con la Storia»¹⁰⁹.

Thus, Calvino's definition of "style" is one tool at our disposal for examining the fundamentally divergent approaches to writing taken by Calvino and Sciascia: the former saw himself as an author, the latter primarily a pamphleteer¹¹⁰ whose stylistic investigations concentrated on honing his *buon novellare* (or, as said in Racalmuto, «portare il racconto»¹¹¹).

Another, very important tool, is their contrasting utilization of Giufà, for Sciascia a tassel in the mosaic of his public self-image.

5. Sciascia and Giufà

In April 1963 Sciascia published *Giufà e il cardinale*, a narrative that grafts Pitrè's *Giufà e lu Judici* (355-56) onto Pitrè's *Giufà e lu Cardinali* (372-75)¹¹². Sciascia's Giufà does not pursue economic self-interest. And what many might consider a flaw – his *letteralità*, to use Sciascia's term, or complete inability to comprehend nuance, subtlety, and metaphor – is in Sciascia a virtue that enables the character to subvert not only what is considered normative

¹⁰⁸ CALVINO, "Introduzione", pp. 23-24.

¹⁰⁹ CALVINO, "Introduzione", p. 25. "Style" in Calvino's parlance is an interrogation of the «quotidianità di immagini grige, di presenze senza volto, di grezzo e sbadato parlare» (CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 76). Its goals are those of enabling the writer, firstly, to define «uno spazio e un colore interno alla pagina, un sistema di rapporti che acquista spessore, un linguaggio calibrato» (CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 76) and, secondly, to actively choose «un sistema di coordinate essenziali per esprimere il nostro rapporto col mondo» (CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 77). An author's personal style is constructed contemporaneously «nell'espressione poetica come nella coscienza morale» (CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 77). It is an unattainable, undefinable goal, an object of desire always just beyond our reach.

¹¹⁰ Leonardo SCIASCIA, "Leonardo Sciascia", in Elio Filippo ACCROCCA (ed.), *Ritratti su misura*, Venezia, Il Sodalizio del libro, 1960, pp. 380-381, p. 381. From early stages of his career as a writer, Sciascia aspired to give vent to his «puntiglio di voler essere solo polemista» (LA CAVA, SCIASCIA, *Lettere dal centro del mondo*, p. 418). In his own words, «[i]o non ho scritto che libelli ... A me interessa dibattere cose di oggi; cose che interessano quante più persone possibile, tenendo come assolutamente secondari i risultati letterari. Se ci sono non m'interessano [...] Perché il trovarmi in una enciclopedia, in una storia della letteratura, o tra i maestri del racconto, mi fa un effetto addirittura iettatorio» (COLLURA, *Il maestro di Regalpetra*, p. 181). His main concerns were ideas and current events. In a letter to Vito Laterza dated 6 September 1955 he described *Le parrocchie* as «un libro che è un pamphlet» (SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, p. 21); and, as he told an interviewer in late 1987, «[n]on ho per fine di scrivere grandi libri. [...] Certo, mi auguro di venir letto, ma della posterità non m'importa nulla...» (James DAUPHINÉ, "Chi è lei, Leonardo Sciascia? Incontro con Leonardo Sciascia", Italian translation by Saverio D'Esposito, «Linea d'ombra», 65 [1991], pp. 37-47, p. 44).

¹¹¹ Leonardo SCIASCIA, "Sciascia a Calvino", «Venerdì Il Caffè - Mensile di attualità», 2.5-6 (July-August-September 1954), no page available.

¹¹² This latter tale is a lengthy variant of Pitrè's *Giufà e lu Canta-matinu* (Giuseppe PITRÈ, *Fiabe novelle e racconti popolari siciliani*, Sala Bolognese, Arnaldo Forni, 1982 [1880], pp. 360-61).

behavior, but also seemingly timeless, ubiquitous Power. Sciascia elsewhere makes such rectitude his own, claiming it is a means for warding against «imposture», «falsità», and «bugie»¹¹³. Moreover, in choosing these two *novelline*, Sciascia looks past other stories that underscore the boy's *stolto-astuto* pursuit of self-gratification. Sciascia's Giufà, as is Pitrè's, is indeed «babbeo»¹¹⁴. But while Pitrè's is *lagnusu* [a complainer] and *mariolo* [a rascal], Sciascia's is also *malizioso* [malicious and spiteful]¹¹⁵.

Pitrè's *Giufà e lu Judici* is a story of how Giufà's inability to understand nothing but the literal meaning of words (Giufà always takes what he is told at face value and acts accordingly) allows him to strike full force, on the nose, the Judge who belittles him. To explain, Giufà files charges against his mother because she does not give him the money earned from the sale of meat he stole from a band of thieves. She cannot pay him, she claims, because she lent the money to a swarm of insolvent flies. He waits a week, loses his patience, then demands justice from the local court. Just when the Judge, who has ruled in favor of the mother simply because of his disdain for the fool, consoles Giufà by giving him leave to kill any fly that crosses his path, one such insect lands on the magistrate's nose. So Giufà punches the fly with such force that he knocks the judge unconscious.

In Pitrè's rendition of *Giufà e lu Cardinali*, Giufà's mother, to get her slacker son out of the house, tells him to go hunt for *un cardiduzzu* (a European finch), which, she explains, is a small bird with a red head. Once in the woods Giufà is elated when he shoots a *cardidunni*, to his mind an extremely large *cardiduzzu*. He brings home his game, a Cardinal, fully expecting his mother to share his joy. Instead, she has nervous spasms. To calm her, he throws the cadaver in a well and covers the body with a layer of stones. Then it occurs to him to drop in a dead wether¹¹⁶ and cover it with a second layer of stones. Soon an unbearable stench begins to emanate from the well, so Giufà, acting on impulse, runs to tell a magistrate where a dead Cardinal can be found. The judge knows Giufà is a simpleton, and tries to send the boy on his way. But Giufà insists, so the Judge goes with a police contingent to investigate. The officers, rather than engage with the fetor themselves, lower Giufà into the well. Once inside, Giufà yells up that the water has turned to stone, and that there is a cadaver below. Giufà is tasked with sending the rocks upward in a bucket. After removing some of them, he reports that the Cardinal had sprouted horns. The «magnanimous» judge is amused, but tells Giufà to keep digging. When Giufà has fully uncovered the carcass, he announces that he has found a gelding. The «magnanimous»¹¹⁷ judge sees humor in the situation; then he tells Giufà to get a job and stop wasting everyone's time, lest he find himself chained to a prison cell.

¹¹³ Leonardo SCIASCIA, *Opere: 1984-1989*, ed. Claude AMBROISE, Milano, Bompiani, 2004 [1991], p. 344.

¹¹⁴ A term Vincenzo Consolo translates as «quiet[e] e quindi fess[o], vale a dire non prepotent[e], non mafios[o]» (Vincenzo CONSOLO, «Una brutta storia italiana», «l'Unità», 24 October 2001, p. 1). In making his selection, Sciascia also looks past stories in which the mother is endowed with agency. For example, in *Giufà e lu Canta-matinu* she hides the body of the man Giufà has killed at the bottom of an empty well, then wards off trouble by killing a wether and throwing it on top of the cadaver. Once in the well, Giufà finds the animal's carcass, then, since he grasps only the literal meaning of words, asks the man's children (who are present to identify the body) if their father was *cornuto*, bringing the investigation to a close.

¹¹⁵ For a clearer view of how this relates to Sciascia's identification with Giufà, see, below, notes 205 and 206.

¹¹⁶ In Pitrè «un crastu» (pp. 360, 370, 374, 375). I take this term – translated in note on p. 370 as «un castrato», or gelding – to signify a castrated male sheep or goat.

¹¹⁷ Giuseppe PITRÈ, *Giufà e lu Cardinali*, in ID., *Fiabe, novelle e racconti popolari siciliani*, volume 3, Palermo, Edikronos, 1982, pp. 372-75, p. 374.

Sciascia's introduction to his re-writing succinctly sets in place an important component of his public self-image (one he will use to explain why he typically reasons in ways unlike those followed by "continental" Italians): the Arab ascendancy of Giufà, and by extension all Sicilians from Sciascia's home Region¹¹⁸.

Equally important, in Sciascia's *Giufà e il Cardinale* Power transcends time. In its original redaction, a Prince of the Roman Catholic Church is synecdoche of metatemporal, arbitrary power: the embodiment of the Inquisition («il cardinale era quello che faceva l'opera di misericordia in piazza della Marina dove su un bel fuoco di legna secca faceva arrostitire uomini e donne, non si sa perchè, forse perché aveva fretta a mandare anime all'altro mondo o perché si divertiva a vedere i corpi abbrustolire»¹¹⁹). His Power is enforced by «ogni sorta di sbirri: quelli del caid e quelli del vicerè, compagni d'arme di re Ferdinando e carabinieri di re Vittorio» and is supported by the *spioni* and *avari* (peers of the anonymous letter writers and others who collaborate with law enforcement in *Il giorno della civetta*) who, always and everywhere, are all too eager to turn on each other and collaborate with the police (in this case in the search for the Cardinal and his killer).

Furthermore, unlike Pitrè's Giufà, who responds spontaneously to a situation far beyond his comprehension – an unappreciative, hysterical mother who has just banished him from his home – Sciascia transforms Giufà into a person motivated by anger, suggesting a level of intelligence to which the popular Giufà, as captured by Pitrè, could not aspire.

6. Calvino, Sciascia, and Giufà

Because of Calvino's work on the *Fiabe*, Sciascia proposed that Calvino write the introduction to the 1971 re-edition of Lanza's *Mimi*. Calvino's introduction to Lanza is important for our purposes because it sheds light on his approach as a writer to popular literature. Calvino saw in Lanza a writer who was interested in both the «mondo

¹¹⁸ Sciascia revised this narrative (Leonardo SCIASCIA, "Giufà e il cardinale", «l'Unità», 28 April 1963, p. 8) for his 1973 collection *Mare colore del vino* (SCIASCIA, *Opere: 1956-1971*, pp. 1306-13). One of the more significant modifications in the rewrite is the transformation of the original «la fece franca per quella malizia che in certi casi gli stupidi sanno spremere» into «la fece franca o per troppa stupidità o per troppa malizia, poiché la stupidità va d'accordo con la malizia sempre, e stupido com'è Giufà sa essere maliziosissimo» (SCIASCIA, *Opere: 1956-1971*, pp. 1306-1307). Furthermore, he changed title to the Arabic جفا, accentuating the Giufà's Arabic ascendancy. As Pappalardo indicates, «[t]he Islamic presence on the island provides Sciascia with an Arab myth of origin that is only elusively imagined, sporadically discussed, and never coherently developed in the author's writings» (Salvatore PAPPALARDO, "From Ibn Ḥamdīs to Giufà: Leonardo Sciascia and the Writing of a Siculo-Arab Literary History", «Italian Culture», 36.1 [March 2018], pp. 32-47, p. 33). Although Sciascia, as Pappalardo points out, could not read Arabic, the writer promoted his Arab ascendancy, and claimed that the a-temporal Sicilian *forma mentis* that informed his thought was fundamentally Arab. Most critics have avoided the question of how to reconcile the importance that Sciascia attributes to Arab Sicily with his knowledge – that of an intelligent non-specialist – of a Siculo-Arab literary and cultural tradition. Traina proposes simply that Sciascia's true Sicily is the Arab Sicily of the poet Ibn Ḥamdīs and the geographer al-Idrisi, «una Sicilia tollerante a cui la Spagna dell'Inquisizione cambierà volto senza che le generosi illusioni dell'Illuminismo siciliano siano poi riuscite a recuperarle alla civiltà se non al livello delle *élites* intellettuali» (Giuseppe TRAINA, *Leonardo Sciascia*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 1999, p. 201).

¹¹⁹ This passage was excised from the re-write, and the Cardinal's brutality and abuse of arbitrary power are transferred to the police. Reference to the wickedness of the Cardinal, and to the clergy in general, is limited to Giufà's speculation that the Cardinal might have sprouted horns after death and final judgement.

culturale contadino» and admired Lanza's «expressive choices»¹²⁰. For Calvino «la dote maggiore» of Lanza's transformation of the oral tradition was his ability to «comunicare il massimo colore con i minimi mezzi»¹²¹.

But Sciascia in 1989 will disagree sharply with the perspectives on Giufà Calvino puts forth (as we shall see) in his “Introduction” to Lanza. In this venue Calvino underscores the fact that the *mimi* are characterized by a «carica d'aggressività»¹²² inherent in all «contese di campanile»¹²³. The resident of a near-by town is derided – very often because he is a fool and/or cuckold – and «inchiodato alla definizione emblematica consegnata una volta per tutte alla facezia»¹²⁴. Because the fool is isolated and «escluso dalla comunità»¹²⁵, he is «considerato fuori dell'umanità»¹²⁶. So, the only option available is to deflect the derision farther down the social ladder, to someone even more pitiful¹²⁷. In fact, «nella mutua denigrazione degli oppressi c'è sempre qualcuno più denigrato e più oppresso di tutti»¹²⁸. Of course, occupying the very bottom of the ladder is Giufà. Although we cheer when Giufà manages to deflect ridicule (for example when his idiocy allows him to do unwittingly what the rest of us lack to courage to do purposely: challenge the essence of power), he is first and foremost a social antibody. That is, he embodies «tutta la stoltezza universale per allontanarla dalla comunità: il raccontare le storie di Giufà conferma narratore e ascoltatore nella loro superiorità nel mondo degli stolti»¹²⁹. So, while in Lanza aggression is *campanilistica*, directed at residents of a rival town, Giufà is universal. To explain, Calvino had noted that none of the Giufà stories provide a physical description of the characters, nor of the setting: «[l]e descrizioni sono quasi sempre scheletriche, la terminologia è generica...»¹³⁰. Because we can project onto him whomever we want, he serves the function of banishing from our midst stupidity, an element of which is his *letteralità*, his inability to grasp linguistic nuance, understatement, sarcasm, and irony¹³¹. If in Lanza, as Calvino argues, the «funzione aggressiva si innesti sulla funzione primaria d'allontanamento della stoltezza»¹³² then Giufà is idiocy *par excellence*.

7. Late 1970s: The Trial of the Red Brigades in Turin

Calvino, even after leaving the Pci in 1957 (subsequent to the Soviet invasions of Hungary and Poland the previous year), remained a supporter of the Communist Party.

¹²⁰ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 1061.

¹²¹ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 1609.

¹²² CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 1602.

¹²³ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 1602.

¹²⁴ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 1602.

¹²⁵ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 1602.

¹²⁶ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 1602.

¹²⁷ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 1602.

¹²⁸ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 1603.

¹²⁹ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 1605.

¹³⁰ CALVINO, “Introduzione”, p. 44.

¹³¹ Irony, according to Sciascia «nasc[e] dalla coscienza non improvvisa ma stabilmente acquisita, della nostra superiorità» (SCIASCIA, *Opere: 1984-1989*, p. 1169). In fact, it is rhetorical device many of Sciascia's characters use to (re)affirm their rank in a male pecking order (Joseph FRANCESE, *Leonardo Sciascia e la funzione sociale degli intellettuali*, Firenze, Firenze University Press, 2012, pp. 55-73).

¹³² CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 1605.

Sciascia's political itinerary is not as linear. As stated above, after the War he felt an affinity for the separatist movement. He was close to Giuseppe Alessi, and, as editor of «Galleria», interacted with the Dc-led *giunta* that governed Sicily. He also included among his friends the communists Cortese, the Macaluso brothers, Massimiliano and Emanuele, and Pompeo Colajanni¹³³.

In 1978 Sciascia told the Socialist periodical *Mondo operaio* how, after the conclusion of the “Operazione Milazzo” he supported, at least initially, the *centro-sinistra*: «ho votato socialista in quegli anni. Ero partito con un voto radicale¹³⁴, poi PSI»¹³⁵. The “Operazione Milazzo” took its name from the President of the Sicilian Region, Silvio Milazzo, who, from October 1958 through February 1960, headed a governing alliance that brought together Socialists, progressive members of the Dc (such as Milazzo), Communists¹³⁶, Monarchists and the neo-fascist Movimento sociale italiano¹³⁷.

As the *centro-sinistra* began to take shape, Sciascia became disenchanted with the Psi, and aligned, in his own words, first with the «PSIUP¹³⁸, poi sono approdato al voto

¹³³ Sciascia maintained a cordial relationship with Colajanni through the 1950s (LA CAVA, SCIASCIA, *Lettere dal centro del mondo*, p. 285) and mentions the partisan hero in an autobiographical piece written in 1962, when the *centro-sinistra* was on the horizon. In that same note it he pledges: «[v]oterò socialista finché sarà possibile. Finché sarà possibile, voglio dire, non votare comunista. Finché sarà onestamente possibile non votare comunista» (Sciascia in ALBERTONE, *La generazione degli anni difficili*, pp. 261-262; Sciascia's emphasis).

¹³⁴ The Partito radicale was founded in December 1955, consequent to a secession of the more progressive members of the Partito Liberale.

¹³⁵ In missives to Vito Laterza, Sciascia, without specifying his allegiance, told how he had participated, «con una certa passione» in 1955 electoral campaign for the renewal of the Sicilian Regional Assembly. Laterza, who was close politically to Tommaso and Vittore Fiore, contributed, it would seem, to the success of Psi in the 1956 municipal elections held in his home city of Bari (SCIASCIA, LATERZA, *L'invenzione di Regalpetra*, pp. 15, 17, 58).

¹³⁶ The Communists believed this alliance would make possible the political isolation of the more rearguard wing of the Dc. The “operation” was also considered, by participating Christian Democrats, a means for defending both regional autonomy – from centripetal pressures exerted by the DC national secretary, Amintore Fanfani – and Sicilian industries from colonization at the hands of monopolies based in Northern Italy. As Martinelli indicates, the national strategy of the Pci at that time sought to «metter in evidenza le contraddizioni interne alla DC, puntando a un rapporto positivo con la sinistra cattolica». Nonetheless, the «embarrassing presence» of the extreme Right «ha sollevato comunque all'interno del PCI perplessità e critiche» (Renzo MARTINELLI, “Il PCI dalle elezioni del 1958 al IX congresso: I comunisti, la ‘via italiana al socialismo’ e il governo”, «Ricerche storiche», 244 [September 2006], pp. 365-383, pp. 365, 375). The center of gravity of this «convergenza temporanea e diversamente motivata» (Rosario BATTAGLIA, Michela D'ANGELO, “Il PCI e il milazzismo: alcune considerazioni sulla linea politica comunista”, in Rosario BATTAGLIA, Michela D'ANGELO, Santi FEDELE [eds.], *Il milazzismo: La Sicilia nella crisi del centrismo*, Roma, Gangemi, 1988, pp. 87-97, pp. 88, 92) of seemingly irreconcilable political forces, according to Giorgio Amendola, was the common goal of impeding the consolidation of «un regime di monopolio politico della DC» (quoted in Emanuele MACALUSO, *I comunisti e la Sicilia*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1970, p. 120).

¹³⁷ The Msi left the coalition in August 1959.

¹³⁸ The Partito socialista italiano di unità proletaria was the result of a split of the Socialist Party. The majority of the Psi wanted to end its alliance with the Pci and approach the parties who formed national government. When the Psi entered the government, those parliamentarians who did not give the new coalition a vote of confidence were expelled. Those who constituted the original nucleus of the Psiup though it would be possible to ally with the Pci. For the Psiup see Aldo AGOSTI, *Il partito provvisorio: Storia del Psiup nel lungo Sessantotto italiano*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2013.

PCI»¹³⁹. In 1975 – because Sciascia agreed with the Pci’s stance on the 1974 divorce referendum and despite the fact that Sciascia strongly disagreed with that Party’s official national strategy of an «historical compromise» with the Dc (which reminded Sciascia of *milazzismo*) – the Communist Regional Secretary in Sicily, Achille Occhetto, convinced Sciascia (who had «convinced himself» the Pci «poteva prendere l’autobus liberale»¹⁴⁰) to participate in an experiment of «buon governo» at Palermo’s City Council. To overcome Sciascia’s refusal to be a candidate, Occhetto finally succeeded in charming the writer with the idea of a «colpo mediatico»: Sciascia and Palermo’s mayor Vito Ciancimino (later convicted for conspiracy with organized crime) contemporaneously entering the new Council’s inaugural meeting from opposite sides of the its Chamber¹⁴¹.

But soon thereafter Sciascia resigned from the City Council and broke with the Pci. After the Moro assassination, because of the Pci’s opposition to negotiations with the Red Brigades, all of Sciascia interventions regarding the role and function of the State «serviranno almeno in parte ad attaccare il Partito comunista»¹⁴². Indeed, according to Sciascia’s friend, the writer Andrea Camilleri, Sciascia assumed an attitude of «anticomunismo viscerale»¹⁴³. In 1979 Sciascia was elected to Parliament as a member of the Radical Party and served on the parliamentary committee charged with investigating the kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro.

It was in the late 1970s, after Sciascia’s falling out with the Pci, that Sciascia advocated on two occasions controversial stances on topical issues. He and Calvino publicly disagreed, thereby casting into high relief their divergent views on what it means to be a citizen of the Italian Republic.

The first instance occurred in May 1977, eight months before kidnapping of Aldo Moro and the murder of the five members of his escort. Each of the sixteen citizen jurors charged with adjudicating the trial of the *colonna torinese* of the Br, after receiving threats from the terrorist organization, presented the court with medical certificates documenting their *sindrome depressiva* and were exempted from service.

A protracted debate ensued that saw Sciascia and Calvino on opposite sides of the barricade. Igniting the polemic was an interview by Eugenio Montale in which the Nobel laureate asserted «non si può chiedere a nessuno di essere un eroe»¹⁴⁴. He added

¹³⁹ SCIASCIA, *La palma va al nord*, pp. 138-39. Sciascia claimed he wrote *Candido* «quando ero appena uscito dal fascino che esercitava su di me il Partito comunista italiano. Non sono mai stato comunista, eppure, per onestà, devo precisare di aver subito l’attrazione del Pci». Writing *Candido* «mi ha procurato un intenso sentimento di libertà» (DAUPHINÉ, “Chi è lei, Leonardo Sciascia?”, p. 40). I would note, in passing (I shall return to this elsewhere), in 1951 Sciascia stated that he joined the Pci when he was 18 years old and exited the Party when he was 24; his departure, he wrote, was «non senza oscillazioni, non senza crisi» (Leonardo SCIASCIA, “L’intelligenza degli ex”, «Sicilia del popolo», 6 December 1951, p. 5, in Paolo CILONA [ed.], *Ricordare Sciascia*, Palermo, Publiscola, 1991, pp. 330-331, p. 330).

¹⁴⁰ Valter VECELLIO, “Leonardo Sciascia e «Il guaio della sinistra in Italia»”, in Pietro MILONE (ed.), *L’Enciclopedia di Leonardo Sciascia*, Milano, La vita felice, 2007, pp. 101-115, p. 102.

¹⁴¹ Achille OCCHETTO, *Secondo me*, Casale Monferrato, Piemme, 2000, pp. 196-98.

¹⁴² Marcelle PADOVANI, “Presentazione”, in Leonardo SCIASCIA, *La Sicilia come metafora, Intervista di Marcelle Padovani*, ed. Marcelle Padovani, Milano, Mondadori, 1979, pp. VII-XIV, p. XII.

¹⁴³ Aldo CAZZULLO, “Camilleri: “Gli scontri con Sciascia, la vita da cieco e il No al referendum”, «Corriere della sera», 19 November 2016 (</www.corriere.it/cronache/16_novembre_19/camilleri-gli-scontri-sciascia-83f1927e-ade5-11e6-97cf-b67e1016ae14.shtml>).

¹⁴⁴ Giulio NASCIBENE, ““La sconfitta dello Stato’, dice Montale, viene da lontano”, «Corriere della sera», 5 May 1977, p. 1.

that he too would have been afraid had he been chosen for jury duty, and would have had himself exempted also¹⁴⁵.

Two days later (11 May 1977¹⁴⁶) Calvino publicly reprimanded Montale for his «morale da don Abbondio»¹⁴⁷. Since

l'istituzione dei giudici popolari, da molto tempo comune ai Paesi più civili, vada salvata e rispettata (oltre che migliorata e riformata dato che vediamo che funziona male), in quanto ogni forma di partecipazione dei cittadini alla vita pubblica è bene che sia potenziata e resa efficiente, anziché svilita¹⁴⁸.

Calvino refused to brook excuses for not meeting one's civic duties: «pur con tutta la paura del caso, non mi sentirei giustificabile in alcun modo se mi sottraessi a un compito per nulla gradevole, ma che l'insieme delle mie idee mi porta a considerare necessario»¹⁴⁹. Those who surrender to «l'arbitrio dei killers misteriosi o l'inappellabilità delle corti marziali»¹⁵⁰, Calvino argued, fail to give the State – which «consiste soprattutto nei cittadini democratici che non si arrendono, che non lasciano andare tutto alla malora»¹⁵¹ – the opportunity to evolve¹⁵². Indeed, «[è] inutile prendersela con magistrati e polizia, che non fanno abbastanza per difenderci da terroristi e rapitori, se poi si disertano le giurie popolari»¹⁵³.

The next day, 12 May 1977, a brief opinion piece by Sciascia appeared on the front page of *Corriere della sera*. His opening tells of how he had started to write a note in which he, like Calvino, quoted Manzoni. But he discarded that draft: *I promessi sposi*, he wrote, is «il più esatto e disperato ritratto dell'Italia [...] come è e come speriamo non sarà in avvenire»¹⁵⁴. Recourse to Manzoni – he stated, implicitly diminishing Calvino's argument – is «immediato e inevitabile [...] da parte di ogni italiano non analfabeta»¹⁵⁵. So, rather than engage with Calvino's reference to don Abbondio, Sciascia averred that he too would have found a way to exempt himself from jury duty. He had no desire to resist «questo crollo o disfacimento in cui in nessun modo e minimamente mi sento responsabile. Salvare la democrazia, difendere la libertà, non cedere, non arrendersi - e così via, coi titoli che vediamo ad ogni avvenimento tragico accendersi sui giornali - sono soltanto parole»¹⁵⁶. Furthermore, he refused to legitimize «una classe politica che non muta e che non muterà se non suicidandosi. Non voglio per nulla distoglierla da questo proposito o contribuire a riconfortarla»¹⁵⁷.

¹⁴⁵ NASCIBENE, “La sconfitta dello Stato”, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ CALVINO, *Saggi*, pp. 2306-10.

¹⁴⁷ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2307.

¹⁴⁸ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2308.

¹⁴⁹ CALVINO, *Saggi*, pp. 2308-2309.

¹⁵⁰ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2309.

¹⁵¹ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2310.

¹⁵² CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2310.

¹⁵³ CALVINO, *Saggi*, pp. 2309-2310.

¹⁵⁴ Leonardo SCIASCIA, “Non voglio aiutarli in alcun modo”, «Corriere della sera», 12 May 1977, p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ SCIASCIA, “Non voglio aiutarli in alcun modo”, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ SCIASCIA, “Non voglio aiutarli in alcun modo”, p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ Sciascia intervened four times in this debate. This op-ed first appeared in «Corriere della sera» with the title “Non voglio aiutarli in alcun modo” (now in Domenico PORZIO [ed.], *Coraggio e virtù degli intellettuali*, Milano, Mondadori, 1977, pp. 12-14). His other three contributions all appeared in «La Stampa» (9 June, 19

Calvino was quick to respond¹⁵⁸. After a succinct summary of the high points of recent Italian history – the 1974 referendum on divorce, the success of the Italian Communist Party in the political elections of 1976¹⁵⁹, the Lockheed scandal¹⁶⁰ – Calvino contended that Italians (including «la gran parte degli elettori che hanno votato DC *nonostante* la DC»¹⁶¹), were frustrated with the «modo di governare della Democrazia cristiana»¹⁶², and with that party's responsibilities for the social and political stasis that afflicted the country. This is why «[s]baglia di grosso Leonardo Sciascia»¹⁶³ when he invokes the «crollo o disfacimento o suicidio di un sistema di potere lasciato a se stesso»¹⁶⁴. Rather, imperative was the recognition of «la grande carica d'energia morale che spinge a non accettare il modo come vanno le cose e che vuole essere parte attiva nel cambiarle»¹⁶⁵. If Sciascia was a pessimist (as Calvino defined the term, «uno che trova che le cose non potrebbero andare peggio»¹⁶⁶), Calvino defined himself an optimist, someone who thought that things could be much worse, but was willing to resist and effect positive change: «soprattutto nella mentalità, nei meccanismi di comportamento, nel modo come vediamo i nostri rapporti col potere e come immaginiamo il nostro futuro»¹⁶⁷.

8. The Late 1970s: The Moro Case

In March 1978, in the immediate aftermath of the Moro kidnapping, Sciascia remained silent, quietly assuming «un atteggiamento interlocutorio»¹⁶⁸: he re-examined his life, what he had written, the consequences of what he had written, and his responsibilities. But an editorial by Aniello Coppola, at the time editor-in-chief of *Paese sera*¹⁶⁹, caused him to break his «silenzio religioso»¹⁷⁰.

Calvino, for his part, nine days after the assassination of the President of the Dc – 18 May 1978 – broke the silence he too had maintained since the kidnapping and provided

June, and 3 July 1977) with the titles “Di disfattismo, della carne e di altre cose”, “Se dissenti, io ti spingo a sinistra”, and “Una risposta a [Edoardo] Sanguineti” (now in PORZIO, *Coraggio e virtù*, pp. 32-38, pp. 125-130, pp. 174-76). As the debate went on, Sciascia had the worst of it: for example, see the contributions of Natalia Ginzburg and Edoardo Sanguineti (PORZIO, *Coraggio e virtù*, pp. 139-43, 163-67, 190-91).

¹⁵⁸ CALVINO, *Saggi*, pp. 2311-15.

¹⁵⁹ The Christian Democrats held, in comparison to the parliamentary elections of 1974, at 38% (but lost four seats in the lower chamber), while the Communists gained 7% (advancing to 34%) and 49 seats.

¹⁶⁰ Allegations circulated that Lockheed Aircraft had bribed a number of high-profile politicians in Italy. Among those implicated was the President of the Italian Republic, Giovanni Leone. While the accusations against Leone were never proven conclusively, in the short term they led to Leone's resignation.

¹⁶¹ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2314. Calvino's emphasis.

¹⁶² CALVINO, *Saggi*, pp. 2313-2314.

¹⁶³ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2315.

¹⁶⁴ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2315.

¹⁶⁵ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2314.

¹⁶⁶ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2315.

¹⁶⁷ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2315.

¹⁶⁸ SCIASCIA, *La palma va al nord*, p. 145.

¹⁶⁹ Coppola wondered aloud why Sciascia, so loquacious during the Red Brigades trial in Turin the previous year, had unexpectedly maintained silent while the terrorist formation was unleashing its assault on «il cuore dello Stato» (Aniello COPPOLA, “Non è tempo di cicale”, «Paese sera», 19 March 1978, p. 1).

¹⁷⁰ SCIASCIA, *La palma va al nord*, p. 145.

an account of how he had struggled, throughout the ordeal, to set emotions aside and subject the shock and trauma of the Moro case to objective analysis. He reasoned that if Moro had been taken prisoner «per aprire breccie nello schieramento politico» and upset the Institutions of the Republic, then the kidnapping «non poteva avere altra soluzione da quella che ha avuto»¹⁷¹. The frontal assault of the Red Brigades on the Dc – paradoxically – granted that Party with «una sorta di immunità morale» while postponing, *sine die*, any sort reckoning for the «colpe accumulatesi in trent'anni di governo e sottogoverno». At the same time, the terrorists had left the Pci with no choice other than the one taken, «concentrare le sue energie» in the defense of Italy's democratic system of government¹⁷².

The Moro case left Calvino less optimistic than the year before: the evil incubated by the Dc had spread throughout Italian society, culminating in the «mostruosità del delitto Moro». Yet he could not help but wonder if some good might come of it, «per un fortunato concorso di circostanze obiettive». But for that to happen, the forces of Good would need the help of the «volontà e intelligenza»¹⁷³ of all Italians.

8 June, precisely three weeks after this intervention by Calvino – if we follow strictly the chronology of the events, rather than causal logic – Sciascia publicly broke his relationship with Einaudi. Sciascia objected to Einaudi's submission – against his instructions – of his novel *Candido* to the jury of a literary prize. He saw this marketing strategy as «una mancanza di riguardo o una disattenzione tanto grave da giustificare – non senza rammarico – la rottura di un vecchio e fedele rapporto»¹⁷⁴.

Ten days later Calvino intervened again in the debate on the Moro case. He asserted that he empathized with those Italians who felt estranged from «la politica dei partiti»¹⁷⁵, and defended them from charges of «qualunquismo»¹⁷⁶. *Qualunquisti*, as he defined them, were indulgent, complicitous, or resigned to the worst¹⁷⁷, a definition that implicitly dovetailed with the self-defined «pessimist»¹⁷⁸ Sciascia claimed to be. Calvino, who had fought in the Resistance, rejected murder as a method of political struggle. But he also reminded his readers that political assassinations were not uncommon, citing the fate of John and Robert Kennedy. What made the killing of Moro uncommon was the fact that it took place «in slow motion»¹⁷⁹ – that is, over fifty-five days. Politicians, he added, know – or they should know – that often «l'esercizio del potere s'accompagna a un rischio mortale»¹⁸⁰. Moreover, and in contradiction of Sciascia's hypothesis, they know – or should know – that public service means being

¹⁷¹ CALVINO, *Saggi*, pp. 2338-2339.

¹⁷² CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2342.

¹⁷³ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2343.

¹⁷⁴ Leonardo SCIASCIA, «Perché lascio Einaudi», «Corriere della sera», 8 June 1978, p. 8. Nonetheless, Sciascia published *Il teatro della memoria* and *Cruciverba* – in 1981 and 1983 – with Einaudi. *Occhio di capra*, which he had promised to Einaudi, was released by Sellerio in 1982, even though, as Sciascia had written to La Cava, «[n]on mi va di saltare da questa barca che affonda» (LA CAVA, SCIASCIA, *Lettere dal centro del mondo*, p. 475). In 1983 Einaudi editore had become financially insolvent.

¹⁷⁵ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2346.

¹⁷⁶ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2346.

¹⁷⁷ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2346.

¹⁷⁸ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2352: see note 192.

¹⁷⁹ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2347.

¹⁸⁰ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2348.

ready «a lasciar tutto da un momento all'altro, perché la vita individuale – la propria – deve prima o poi finire e non può essere la cosa che conta di più»¹⁸¹.

Sciascia completed *L'Affaire Moro* on 24 August 1978. Because its main arguments are well known and for reasons of space I will not summarize here. Suffice it to say that he praised the Red Brigades for their «etica carceraria» (the captive Moro was treated much better than their cronies held in State prisons¹⁸²). By contrast, the State (through Parliament's two major Parties, the Dc and the Pci), while not the material assassin, had re-instated, *ipso facto*, the death penalty and was responsible for Moro's death. It was, he argued, an «assassinio legale»¹⁸³ committed for reasons of State.

Calvino's review of *L'Affaire* appeared soon after the book's publication, and in «L'Ora di Palermo» (Sciascia's home turf, so to speak). The review is reminiscent of the letters Calvino, in an editor at Einaudi, sent over the years in response to Sciascia's manuscripts. Calvino accentuates the positive. The book is well written; he appreciates «la finezza di molte osservazioni», especially the perspicacity of Sciascia's analyses of the use of the term 'statist' and of Moro's personality¹⁸⁴. Then he administers a few *bocconi amari*, to borrow Calvino's term. Sciascia's «tesi di fondo» is just plain wrong: given the constraints, the Italian government could not have handled the case in any other way. And *L'Affaire Moro* «conferma che uno spiraglio per una qualsiasi trattativa non viene mai aperto dai rapitori»¹⁸⁵. Indeed, if even a hint of a desire to negotiate had come from the Br, «malgrado tutte le dichiarazioni spartane»¹⁸⁶, given «l'elasticità del mondo politico italiano»¹⁸⁷, a deal would certainly have been made.

However, he stresses (implicitly turning against Sciascia the latter's demand that he be allowed to «contraddire e contraddirsi»¹⁸⁸),

se questo caso si fosse verificato, cioè se i governanti avessero stabilito il principio che per salvare la vita di un uomo di governo si può fare qualsiasi compromesso, mentre i semplici cittadini sono alla mercé di uccisioni, rapimenti e rapine, allora sono sicuro che l'indignazione civile di Sciascia sarebbe stata ancora più categorica [...]»¹⁸⁹.

For Calvino, the strength of Sciascia's reflections – Sciascia considered the Moro case «come la tragedia di un uomo, ed un uomo rappresentativo di una storia e di un costume»¹⁹⁰ – is its greatest weakness. Sciascia had viewed the case «come un fatto isolato, senza un prima ed un poi»¹⁹¹. Rather, the Moro *affaire* needed contextualization: it was merely one episode in a long-term terrorist strategy whose goal was to trigger a civil war. And, Calvino underscores, herein lies the fundamental,

¹⁸¹ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2348.

¹⁸² Leonardo, SCIASCIA, *Opere: 1971-1983*, ed. Claude AMBROISE, Milano, Bompiani, 2004 [1987], pp. 472-473.

¹⁸³ SCIASCIA, *Opere: 1971-1983*, p. 499.

¹⁸⁴ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2349.

¹⁸⁵ CALVINO, *Saggi*, pp. 2349-2350.

¹⁸⁶ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2350.

¹⁸⁷ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2350.

¹⁸⁸ SCIASCIA, *La palma va al nord*, p. 177.

¹⁸⁹ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2350.

¹⁹⁰ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2351.

¹⁹¹ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2351.

irreconcilable contradiction in Sciascia's logic: despite all the declarations to the contrary, Sciascia shows himself to be the optimist¹⁹²: Sciascia's hope that Moro's kidnapping could have had a «happy ending» was «un'illusione che sarebbe stato più pietoso non coltivare»¹⁹³.

9. Sciascia and Giufà, redux

In 1989, four years after Calvino's death, Sciascia, in what was probably the last essay he wrote before his own demise – an introduction to a Giufà anthology edited by Corrao¹⁹⁴ – takes exception to Calvino's 1956 characterization of Giufà as a fool: «[m]a sono propriamente comiche, le storie di Giufà? E Giufà è proprio uno sciocco?», he asks¹⁹⁵. If, for Calvino, Giufà is «lo sciocco a cui tutte finiscono per andar bene», he continues, «si può davvero dire sciocco» someone «a cui tutte finiscono per andar bene?». Especially when Giufà's «sciocchezze» are «sempre dettate da una specie di demone della *letteralità*»¹⁹⁶. He concludes that Giufà's «socially absurd» actions not only are «transgressive» but are congruous with «un “diritto naturale”», a universal aversion to falsehoods: they are proof of Giufà's «libertà dalla menzogna»¹⁹⁷. Moreover, Giufà's lack of awareness of «il danno che le sue azioni riversano sugli altri» is not «sciocco», «almeno nella misura in cui non è sciocca ogni affermazione di libertà, di verità»¹⁹⁸.

This, of course is true. But it is true only to the extent that Sciascia, it seems, ignored the distinction between the moral conscience and interior freedom of the specialist (the ethics of principle of private intellectuals who give voice to their convictions without fear of consequence) on the one hand, and, on the other, the ethics of responsibility that binds the public intellectual and the politician (for Weber someone who aspires to

¹⁹² By contrast, in this instance Calvino saw himself as a pessimist, indeed, «più fedele al pessimismo proprio di Sciascia di quanto non lo sia Sciascia stesso» (CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2352).

¹⁹³ CALVINO, *Saggi*, p. 2352. While this controversy went forth, both Calvino and Sciascia concluded work on their contributions to Pitre's collection of Sicilian folktales, *Novelline popolari siciliane* (published by Sellerio in November 1978). Calvino wrote a brief introduction and Sciascia translated one of the tales into standard Italian.

¹⁹⁴ SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, in Francesca Maria CORRAO (ed.), *Le storie di Giufà*, Palermo, Sellerio, 2001, pp. 9-19. In 1991 Sciascia's “Prefazione” appeared in *Giufà il furbo, lo sciocco, il saggio* (pp. 7-15), edited by Francesca Maria Corrao (Corrao also wrote the “Introduzione”) for Arnoldo Mondadori. Later that same year, a re-edition of that book came forth with Sellerio with the title *Le storie di Giufà*. Sciascia's contribution was retitled “L'arte di Giufà” (pp. 7-19), while Corrao's introduction was moved to the rear of the book and re-titled “Per una storia di Giufà”. In an email dated 17 November 2017, Paolo Squillaciotti, curator of the 2012 Adelphi edition of Sciascia's *Opere*, kindly reminded me that the 1991 collection of Giufà stories edited by Corrao for Bompiani includes no indication of when Sciascia wrote the essay in question, but that the 2001 Sellerio re-edition is dated 1989. He added that he had not done research on the matter, but that Sciascia would have had to have written it prior to September 1989, when his deteriorating health would not have allowed him to work on a text of this length. He also pointed out that the final sentences of the text allow us to surmise that Sciascia wrote the note «con davanti la raccolta della Corrao in forma pre-print», but he did not know why two years passed before the book came into print. I would be remiss if I did not heartily thank Dr. Squillaciotti, not only for this email, but for other information he has shared with me, particularly useful in locating and retrieving other texts by Sciascia.

¹⁹⁵ SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 11.

¹⁹⁶ SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 12.

¹⁹⁷ SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 12.

¹⁹⁸ SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 12.

participate or participates in the distribution of power¹⁹⁹, an activity Sciascia fully engaged in not only as a public intellectual but as a member of Palermo's City Council and Italy's National Parliament) to always keep in mind the consequences of their guidance and actions for their followers.

Sciascia then explicitly responds to Calvino's 1971 introduction to Lanza's *Mimi* to argue that if Giufà is a social antibody, that isolation is the source of Giufà's strength. Isolation allows him to make «vacillare le “menzogne convenzionali” che la comunità accetta e pratica, e su cui si regge»²⁰⁰. He then asks if the «superiorità»²⁰¹ Calvino claims Giufà inspires – in both narrator and listener – is not better described as a form of social envy, an «illusione consolatoria», compensation for the lack of «libertà e impunità di cui Giufà invece gode». He then proposes that «Giufà rappresenta il sogno dell'impunità»²⁰², the dream lived by Candido Munafò, Sciascia's most autobiographical character²⁰³, and protagonist of his «most autobiographical work»²⁰⁴; someone who, like Giufà, is «assolutamente refrattario a ogni sentimento»²⁰⁵.

Thus, Sciascia's idiosyncratic reading transforms the character into a projection of his public self-image²⁰⁶. Giufà, he argues, «è un lontano, remoto antenato»²⁰⁷ of Candide, Voltaire's optimist and model for Sciascia's *Candido, ovvero un sogno fatto in Sicilia*:

[n]el suo stare alla lettera delle cose e alle cose della lettera, Giufà è in effetti un vendicatore ignaro: vendica tutte le interpretazioni, i traslati, i tentacoli le sottigliezze per cui la parola è stata adattata a nascondere il pensiero e a conculcare il diritto²⁰⁸.

¹⁹⁹ Max WEBER, *La scienza come professione. La politica come professione*, Italian translation by Helga Grünhof, Pietro Rossi, Francesco Tuccari, Torino, Einaudi, 2001, p. 49.

²⁰⁰ SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 17.

²⁰¹ SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 17.

²⁰² SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 16.

²⁰³ SCIASCIA, *La palma va al nord*, p. 199.

²⁰⁴ SCIASCIA, *La palma va al nord*, p. 199, and p. 166.

²⁰⁵ SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 13. Sciascia, for polemical purposes, must force the Giufà tales into a pre-determined mould. For example, Giufà's universality («a Giufà mai è stato assegnato un luogo di nascita», he writes [SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 15]) enables Sciascia to deduce that the boy «non è tanto sciocco» (SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 15): residents, Sciascia explains, of every town in Sicily – «una regione dove ogni paese afferma la propria superiorità “intellettuale”» (SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 15) – happily disown him so that his stupidity can be assigned to a rival town. Therefore, since no one wants Giufà, «può appartenere a ogni paese e a tutti, e insomma all'intera Sicilia» (SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 15).

²⁰⁶ Sciascia's reading of Giufà is strongly conditioned by his perspectives on Sicilian atavism or essentialism (see FRANCESE, *Leonardo Sciascia e la funzione sociale degli intellettuali*, p. 53), which, in turn, are influenced by his ideas on the idiosyncratic nature of Power in Sicily. In 1980 he argued that because Sicilians have «un'altra e diversa esperienza del potere: di un potere che non costruisce, che non edifica, che non opera [...] per il bene di tutti». Therefore, any theme that is not «più o meno direttamente collegabile a quello del potere nei suoi rappresentanti di vertice e nelle sue manifestazioni più immediate, più arbitrarie, più folli o che abbia a che fare col costruire, con l'edificare e *tout court* col fare associativo, sociale, sia quasi del tutto estraneo alla novellistica popolare siciliana» (Leonardo SCIASCIA, “Presentazione”, in Giuseppe COCCHIARA, *Il paese di cuccagna e altri studi di folkore*, Torino, Boringhieri, 1980, pp. IX-XII, pp. IX-X).

²⁰⁷ SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, p. 17.

²⁰⁸ SCIASCIA, “L'arte di Giufà”, pp. 15-16.

By identifying with a social outcast, a character whose deafness to nuance inevitably places him outside all «cosche»²⁰⁹, Sciascia casts himself as a *vendicatore consapevole*.

What remains vague, to me, even after reading an array of exegeses, is how *la parola* is avenged by Giufà. He makes us laugh, as Corrao notes, when he causes us to interrogate «il senso invalso nelle espressioni idiomatiche»²¹⁰. He makes us laugh when he acts without thinking, «cioè senza preoccuparsi del senso, o dei vari sensi, che alcune espressioni idiomatiche assumono a seconda del variare del contesto»²¹¹. He makes us laugh because he «understands the world in a literal sense»²¹², and «is not conscious or aware of what the consequences of his actions will be»²¹³. Thus, for Zipes Giufà «is clearly a fool, but he is not a wise fool»²¹⁴. Often, according to Corrao, Giufà «non fa altro che danneggiare se stesso»²¹⁵. Most importantly (for those of us who believe literature and politics can transform consciousness and reality), Giufà's «vendicare», as Marrone writes, never goes beyond the «gesto isolato, privo di riscontro e senza conseguenze reali»²¹⁶.

The incongruity of Giufà's impunity in the face of absolute power, his exemption from restriction, also makes us laugh. Indeed, it is impossible to deny that most readers participate vicariously when Giufà punches a sitting judge on the nose²¹⁷, something only a *stolto*, that is, a *vendicatore inconsapevole* would do.

However, and *pace* Sciascia, Giufà is funny only to the extent each of us can say 'that could never be me, I would never be so blind or stupid'; 'that would never happen to people like me, I would never allow myself to be put in that position'. In other words, he can make us laugh only if a splitting of the ego occurs. We identify with Giufà, but only up to a certain point²¹⁸. Giufà is funny because he affords us the comfort of knowing that no matter how unfortunate our lives may be, he is worse off. He is comical because he misinterprets and, consequently, acts in a way – particularly when he disrespects authority – the rest of us can only fantasize.

Thus, he not only frees us from social restrictions, temporarily, but from psychological ones as well. He can do so because he exists at the crossroads of the pleasure and reality principles.

²⁰⁹ In Sciascia's opinion «i siciliani "buoni"» (e.g. Ettore Majorana, Diego La Matina) are not «portati a fare gruppo, a stabilire solidarietà e a stabilirvisi (sono i siciliani peggiori quelli che hanno il genio del gruppo, della "cosca")» (SCIASCIA, *Opere: 1971-1983*, pp. 223-224).

²¹⁰ Francesca Maria CORRAO, "Per una storia di Giufà" in EAD., *Le storie di Giufà*, Palermo, Sellerio, 2013, pp. 133-170, p. 154.

²¹¹ CORRAO, "Per una storia di Giufà", p. 154.

²¹² ZIPES, "The indomitable Giuseppe Pitrè", p. 15.

²¹³ ZIPES, "The indomitable Giuseppe Pitrè", p. 15.

²¹⁴ ZIPES, "The indomitable Giuseppe Pitrè", p. 15.

²¹⁵ CORRAO, "Per una storia di Giufà", p. 154.

²¹⁶ Gianfranco MARRONE, *Stupidità*, Milano, Bompiani, 2012, pp. 20-21.

²¹⁷ SCIASCIA, "L'arte di Giufà", p. 17.

²¹⁸ Giufà, if I may borrow Freud's phrasing, sparks two contrary reactions that «persist as the centre-point of a splitting of the ego» (Sigmund FREUD, "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence", in James STRACHEY [ed.], *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, London, Hogarth Press, 1966-1974, pp. 275-278, p. 276). Splitting, a common defense mechanism, is the failure in a person's thinking to bring together the dichotomy of both positive and negative qualities of the self and others into a cohesive, realistic whole.

10. Conclusion

While Calvino was the bearer of uncomfortable truths, based in a rational analysis of reality, Sciascia saw his mission as that of making known «la propria verità, o meglio: la verità»²¹⁹. And his subjective truths, at the time of their utterance had great purchase. Even though thinkers (Calvino, for example) and politicians identified the flaws in Sciascia's analysis of the letters written by the captive Aldo Moro (not only was the Italian government wary of giving the appearance of the State surrendering – even while behind-the-scenes negotiations aiming at a so-called humanitarian solution would have allowed for Moro's liberation were taking place –, but, first and foremost, it could not give the Red Brigades political recognition as a legitimate counterpart to the State, transforming them into a “State within the State”, to use the terrorists' terminology, because doing so would have been a violation of the Italian Constitution), Sciascia's interpretation was common sense for many Italians for decades²²⁰.

The problem raised by the cultural divide of the *anni di piombo* for today's reader is that of learning from the past, which means, among other things, setting aside preconceived notions, and gaining and maintaining the ability to negotiate pleasure and reality principles. In our case, we must contend with the elevation of subjective truth (*la verità che vorremmo che fosse stata*, so to speak) to the level of Truth, in a time when *fake news* has been elevated to art form (through what has been called an «illusory truth effect»²²¹, a mental process that equates repetition with truth), and in a time when increasingly polarized electorates ignore news that displeases because it does not re-confirm beliefs and convictions.

Sciascia was most certainly a master of the *buon novellare*: of creating reader empathy for his protagonists, of leading readers to identify with his narrating voices. His works participated in a postmodern literary season that seemed to revel in casting into doubt the idea of historiographic truth; that proposed that truth is subjective; that material reality can be known only through our interpretations and our interpretations of those interpretations. And, quite frankly, Sciascia narratives have an uncommon force:

²¹⁹ DAUPHINÉ, “Chi è lei, Leonardo Sciascia?”, p. 44.

²²⁰ I am referring not only to *L’Affaire Moro*, and to Sciascia's interventions on the 1977 trial of the Red Brigades (which, as Guido CRAINZ affirmed in 2016, are «difficile rileggere oggi» [*Storia della Repubblica: L’Italia dalla Liberazione ad oggi* Rome, Donzelli, 2016, p. 208]). I also have in mind Sciascia's controversial essay “I professionisti dell'antimafia”, which Gian Carlo CASELLI still considered, twenty years after the fact, an open wound (“La ferita di Sciascia”, «l'Unità», 13 January 1987, p. 1). Indeed, Paolo Borsellino, in his last public intervention, a commemoration of Giovanni Falcone, 25 June 1992, told of «come in effetti [...] cominciò a farlo morire [...] quell'articolo di Leonardo Sciascia sul *Corriere della Sera* che bollava me come professionista dell'Antimafia e l'amico Leoluca Orlando come professionista dell'Antimafia in politica” (Paolo BORSELLINO, “Falcone cominciò a morire nel 1988”, in Antonella MASCALI [ed.], *Le ultime parole di Falcone e Borsellino*, Milano, Chiarelettere, 2012, pp. 99-106, p. 101).

²²¹ See FAZIO, BRASHIER, PAYNE and MARSH for whom ‘illusory truth’ is a rhetorical technique based in ambiguity and redundancy: «misconceptions enter our knowledge base and inform our choices» because «processing fluency» (that is, «the ease with which people comprehend statements») «informs a variety of judgements» because it is facilitated by repetition (Linda K. FAZIO, Nadia M. BRASHIER, B. Keith, PAYNE, Elizabeth J. PAYNE, “Knowledge Does Not Protect Against Illusory Truth”, «*Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*», 144.5 [2015], pp. 993-1002, p. 993).

his interpretations convince²²².

Calvino, especially Calvino «combinatorio»²²³, has also been defined a “postmodern” writer. As we have seen, he saw his task as one of «trascrizione o riscrittura, applicato ai testi»²²⁴. In other words, the author of *Il castello dei destini incrociati*, while transcribing Pitrè, postured himself as yet another «anello dell’anonima catena senza fine per cui le fiabe si tramandano, anelli che non sono mai puri strumenti, trasmettitori passivi, ma [...] i suoi veri «autori»²²⁵. The Tuscan proverb quoted in Calvino’s introduction to the *Fiabe italiane* – «La novella nun è bella, / se sopra nun ci si rappella»²²⁶ – would influence him for decades.

To their credit, both Sciascia and Calvino, because of this purported gap between text and political-social-historical reality, afford us the opportunity to test our capabilities for critical reading.

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²²² For an analysis of some rhetorical strategies utilized in a novel by Sciascia, see Joseph FRANCESE, “The Death Penalty and Narrative Strategies in *Porte aperte* by Leonardo Sciascia”, «Forum Italicum», 51.3 (2017), pp. 775–798.

²²³ In the late 1960s and 1970s Calvino was influenced by the writings of Roland Barthes, the fictions of Jorge Borges, Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, Raymond Queneau and the OuLiPo group (the *Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle*, or workshop of potential literature) who were in turn influenced by the Russian Formalists and Structuralism. Thus, he wrote *Il castello dei destini incrociati* (1969), *Le città invisibili* (1972), and *Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore* (1979), novels in which he strove to lay bare to readers the literary artifice, that is, the structure of the narration.

²²⁴ CALVINO, “Introduzione”, p. 33.

²²⁵ CALVINO, “Introduzione”, pp. 21-22.

²²⁶ CALVINO, “Introduzione”, p. 21.

- BORSELLINO, Paolo, “Falcone cominciò a morire nel 1988”, in MASCALI, Antonella (ed.), *Le ultime parole di Falcone e Borsellino*, Milano, Chiarelettere, 2012, pp. 99-106.
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