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'Power' and 'Reason' in the Works of Three Sicilian
Writers: Federico De Roberto, Vitaliano Brancati
and Leonardo Sciascia

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CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Notes	14
Chapter 2: Federico De Roberto	16
<u>I Vicerè</u> , 20; <u>L'Imperio</u> , 43	
Notes	57
Chapter 3: Vitaliano Brancati	63
'Novelle di pensione', 68; <u>Singolare avventura di viaggio</u> , 74; <u>Canto di negri</u> , 78; <u>Stagione calma</u> , 82; <u>Rodolfo</u> , 83; 'Sul comico', 86; <u>Gli anni perduti</u> , 89; Individualism, 103; <u>Sogno di un valzer</u> , 108; 'Il sonno', 110; <u>Un uomo di fede</u> , 112; <u>Don Giovanni in Sicilia</u> , 114; <u>Il vecchio con gli scivali</u> , 118; <u>La noia del '937</u> , 121; <u>La doccia</u> , 123; 'La libertà', 125; <u>Il bell'Antonio</u> , 127	
Notes	135
Chapter 4: Leonardo Sciascia	142
<u>Le parrocchie di Regalpetra</u> , 147; <u>Gli zii di Sicilia</u> , 151; <u>Il giorno della civetta</u> , 164; <u>Il Consiglio d'Egitto</u> , 169; <u>Morte dell'Inquisitore</u> , 178; <u>L'onorevole</u> , 180; <u>A ciascuno il suo</u> , 186; <u>Il contesto</u> and <u>Todo modo</u> , 200; <u>Candido</u> , 223; <u>I pugnalatori</u> and <u>L'affaire Moro</u> , 234; <u>Il cavaliere e la morte</u> and <u>Una storia semplice</u> , 239	
Notes	267
Conclusions	281
Select bibliography	287

* This list is not a complete index of all the works examined in this study. It is intended, instead, as a general aid to orientation within the dissertation.

Chapter 1: Introduction.

It has frequently been suggested that one of the characteristics of post-war Italian narrative is the way in which writers have sought to represent in their works the rapidly-changing reality of their country (1). Notwithstanding the doubt cast on the ability of literature to represent anything other than the image of the ideological context in which it is produced, the fact remains that the tradition of classic realism is particularly strong in modern Italian literature, and one writer whose work has always demonstrated a concern with that reality is Leonardo Sciascia. This study will show that Sciascia's work can be seen to belong to a tradition which can be traced back through the works of two earlier Sicilian writers, Federico De Roberto and Vitaliano Brancati, representative of generations which lived through two other periods of rapid social and political change in Italian society.

The title of this study implies, to some extent, the existence of a 'Sicilian tradition', as the term 'Sicilian writers' refers not simply to writers born in the same region, - indeed, were it to do so, Federico De Roberto would be excluded by virtue of the fact that he was born in Naples - but to writers whose works display a distinctive regional character. This is not intended in a limitative sense - in the sense of provincialism - as can be demonstrated by the long list of writers whose importance on the national and, in some cases, international literary scene is undeniable, and yet, whose works can frequently be defined as belonging to this Sicilian tradition: Verga, Capuana, Pirandello, Borgese, Vittorini, Quasimodo, Tomasi

Di Lampedusa and, more recently, Bonaviri, Bufalino and Consolo. Nor is it merely a question of content: each of the authors dealt with here did attempt to interpret a specifically Sicilian reality, but they did not devote themselves exclusively to this local subject matter and, indeed, as will be suggested below, there is a tendency in their works to pass from this interpretation of Sicilian society to an analysis of Italian society in general and, in the case of Sciascia, to a discussion of conflicting values in post-industrial society. This attempt to describe the world in general in terms of the discourse suggested by a regional context can be expressed by the title of the book-length interview given by Sciascia to the French journalist, Marcelle Padovani - La Sicilia come metafora (1979), Sicily as a metaphor. Inherent in this idea, however, is the paradox of the particularity/universality of Sicily.

Within the Sicilian tradition referred to above, there is a strong inclination towards the classic verist conception of literature as a means of interpreting reality. Verga, in the introduction to his novel I Malavoglia (1881), one of the most important documents of verismo, expresses his intention of representing unadulterated reality in his work:

Chi osserva questo spettacolo [dei vinti] non ha il diritto di giudicarlo; è già molto se riesce a trarsi un istante fuori del campo della lotta per studiarla senza passione, e rendere la scena nettamente, coi colori adatti, tale da dare la rappresentazione della realtà com'è stata o come avrebbe dovuto essere. (2)

De Roberto makes a similar claim in his preface to the volume of short stories, Processi verbali (1889): 'Sono la nuda e impersonale trascrizione di piccole commedie e di

piccoli drammi colti sul vivo' (3). Tomasi di Lampedusa's novel, Il Gattopardo (1958), notwithstanding its highly lyrical style, is also an attempt to explain post-unification Italian history through the representation of a particular moment in Sicilian history. Even the works of Pirandello, to which has been attributed 'universal' significance, are rooted, Sciascia suggests, in a specifically Sicilian 'reality': note, for example, the narrator's comments in Todo modo (1974);

'E per tante ragioni, non ultima quella di esser nato e per anni vissuto in luoghi pirandelliani, tra personaggi pirandelliani, con traumi pirandelliani (al punto che tra le pagine dello scrittore e la vita che avevo vissuto fin oltre la giovinezza non c'era più scarto, e nella memoria e nei sentimenti)'. (4)

In the works of De Roberto, Brancati and Sciascia there is a close connexion between the characters, their attitudes and relationships, and contemporary political and social conditions, of the kind which Erich Auerbach, in his discussion of the representation of reality in Western literature, suggested first appeared in Stendhal's narrative (5). A reference to Stendhal is not gratuitous, for among the many writers cited by Sciascia, the former occupies a prominent position, and, on more than one occasion, Sciascia argued that both De Roberto and Brancati had been profoundly influenced by Stendhal: indeed, describing Brancati's Il bell'Antonio as 'un calco felice' of Stendhal's Armance, Sciascia points clearly to that aspect of the two authors' work referred to here;

Non vogliamo dire per quel che attiene al caso dell'impotenza sessuale dei protagonisti, o non tanto; ma per il rapporto tra il caso di impotenza e gli anni di

Carlo X in Stendhal, gli anni del fascismo in Brancati.
(6)

The three writers whose works are examined here share a number of characteristics, even if there are inevitably stylistic differences between their works. Among the elements in common, and that which is at the core of this study, is their representation of society as a conflict between 'power' and 'reason', fundamental terms which require some further definition.

Rationalism as a philosophy dates back to the classical era, but it was probably the eighteenth century which had the greatest influence on what was to become one of the predominant aspects of modern epistemological theory. During the Enlightenment, emphasis was placed on 'reason' as a source of knowledge, as the faculty by which fundamental truths are intuitively apprehended, allowing the mind to deduce the causes of all facts. This concept can be traced back to Plato's distinction between knowledge which can be explained by 'reasoning' (logismos), and opinion or belief (doxa) (7). Kant defined the Enlightenment as 'l'uscita dell'uomo da uno stato di minorità di cui egli stesso è colpevole. Minorità è l'incapacità di valersi del proprio intelletto senza la guida di un altro' (8). This 'autonomous' intellect stood, in fact, for the intellect guided by reason, which, in accordance with traditional rationalist doctrine, was an innate notion. Radical rationalism proposed human reason as a final criterion, in opposition to those doctrines resting solely or ultimately on external authority. In Italy, the Enlightenment emphasis

on the notion of reason as ultimate authority was promoted by figures such as Pietro Verri and the other contributors to the Milanese review, Il Caffè (1764-65) (9), but the principal cause of the spread of Enlightenment ideas among modern Italian writers was probably the influence of eighteenth-century French literature.

Through a rejection of the tyranny and intolerance of, for example, religious authority, the intellectuals of the Enlightenment aspired to the conquest of human happiness through freedom. Such a humanist approach at times failed to bear in mind that religion itself began with a rational attempt to establish a relationship with unknown powers, while the rationalism which the Enlightenment came to endorse, itself implied an absolute, dogmatic and, even, religious faith in the validity of human reason. Thus, as Horkheimer and Adorno suggested in their definition of the concept, the Enlightenment, despite its objective of freeing humanity of its fears and myths, itself tended to revert to myth (Dialettica dell'illuminismo, pp. 11-50).

In the eighteenth century, it was common for philosophers to offer a rationalistic account of both 'natural' and 'moral' knowledge, and ethical rationalism, such as that of Kant, held that moral principles were ultimately derived from pure objective reason alone (Cottingham, pp. 128-33). This objectivity has been challenged on many fronts, but, nonetheless, the influence of Kantian theories of reason as the origin of human knowledge and morality has persisted, and, if anything, this type of rationalism has become the dominant ideology of European society.

Such is the extent to which the discourse of Enlightenment rationalism has permeated our society that there is a tendency to suppress questions regarding the meaning of the very term 'reason'. A rational reliance on one's own intellect tends to ignore the subjective nature of such an authority: while repudiating 'Authority', it fails to recognize its own establishment of an elitist intellectual authority. Meanwhile, modern linguistic theory has defined 'reason' itself as nothing more than a specific meaning elevated to a privileged position by the ideology of liberal humanism: according to such theories, what generally passes for an absolute value is, in fact, a construct of the dominant ideology of our society. The importance we attribute to 'reason' is explained as a response to our yearning 'for the sign which will give meaning to all others - the "transcendental signifier" - and for the anchoring, unquestionable meaning to which all our signs can be seen to point' (10). Recent analyses unmask the intrinsically 'religious' nature of our liberal humanist society's recourse to 'reason' as an absolute criterion, rendering transparent perhaps the most firmly entrenched of opinions transmitted to us by the society in which we live. It must be clear, therefore, that the use of the term 'reason' in what follows implies an awareness of the ideological nature of the concept and, indeed, unless otherwise stated, refers to the liberal humanist ideal described above.

In the works of the three authors who are the subject of this study, 'reason' appears, in various degrees of explicitness, but primarily in the form of a rejection of

dogma, and as the foundation of an ethic which opposes a pragmatic approach to society's problems. Pragmatism, doctrine and dogmatism constitute what is referred to below as 'power', which is portrayed as the antithesis of this rational ideal. It is the intention of this study to show, in the first place, how a conflict of ethics - the lack of correspondence between the values of 'power' and those founded on 'reason' - is a central concern of the works of De Roberto, Brancati and Sciascia.

The insistence of these writers on an ethic based on the exercise of their own intellect led, inevitably, to a degree of social and intellectual isolation. This isolation is not, of course, a destiny peculiar to Sicilian writers, and is, in fact, linked to another fundamental paradox of liberal humanist culture which, while frequently expressing a concern with the problems of society, reserves the right to adopt an idealistic, rather than practical approach to those problems. Such a stand has defined the (probably inevitable) limits of literature's ability to change society, so that, at best, it can aspire to the role of social conscience of the cultured class. Indeed, this constant appeal to 'reason' is the way in which writers express or seek solidarity with readers who share their liberal humanist ideals (11).

While, as I have stated, the adoption of an individualistic position is not peculiar to Sicilian writers, there are, however, historical and cultural reasons which might explain the propensity of these writers towards such a choice. Although political activists might be reluctant to accept such a view, and, indeed, there are notable

exceptions to the general picture, it is probably reasonable to say that Sicilian history and society has, on the whole, been characterized by the sacrifice of collective interests to those of the individual, of the interests of an inexistent or alien State to those of the family. No attempt will be made here at a thorough sociological analysis of the phenomenon: instead, let us note an example of how it has passed into the region's popular oral culture and from there into its literature. In Francesco Lanza's story of 'I tredici sindaci di San Cataldo', the thirteen councillors of the town of San Cataldo in the province of Caltanissetta (but Calvino, in his introduction to the Mimi siciliani (1928), suggests that in the majority of the stories collected under this title the place names are interchangeable (12)) are called upon to elect the mayor from their number but, after a long and fruitless discussion, each writes his own name on the ballot paper, declaring to the public as he casts his vote, "Questo lo faccio per il bene del popolo" (Mimi siciliani, p. 96). Might this cultural background explain to some extent the intense individualism of generations of Sicilian writers and their recourse to an ethic based on the individual's exercise of 'reason'? It is worth noting that it was another Sicilian writer, Elio Vittorini (1908-1966), who, from the pages of the Milanese periodical Il Politecnico (1945-47), led the argument in favour of literature being free from political constraints such as those imposed by the PCI (13).

In spite of their initial faith in reason, the works of each of the three writers examined here reveal a growing

dissatisfaction with this ideology of reason, which can be termed a 'crisis of reason' - a central theme in JoAnn Cannon's study of Sciascia and three other modern Italian writers (Postmodern Italian Fiction; see note (1) above). In the case of De Roberto and Sciascia this crisis took the form of an ever-increasing awareness of and emphasis on the possibility of subverting the discourse of reason, particularly in the form of the written text, one of the arms of Enlightenment humanism. In Sciascia, this was coupled, to some extent, with the recognition of the inherent danger of reason becoming its own measure. For Brancati, the dilemma manifested itself largely as a conflict between reason and the senses.

The three writers were each from very different economic and social backgrounds. De Roberto was born in Naples in 1861, and died in 1927. He spent a large part of his life in Catania, the city of his mother, donna Marianna degli Asmundo, whose family belonged to the local aristocracy (14). His father, who died when the author was eleven, had been an officer in the Bourbon army and, subsequently, in that of the Kingdom of Italy. In Catania, the young De Roberto met Verga and Capuana, and, under their influence, he embarked on a literary career: his first collection of short stories, La sorte, in which this influence is evident, was published in 1887. His life was dedicated almost entirely to literature and journalism, and, particularly in the later years, to the care of his mother. Brancati was born in Pachino, in the province of Syracuse, in 1907. His father, Rosario, was a lawyer with literary aspirations, and

probably encouraged those of his son. After various moves connected to the work of Rosario Brancati, the family settled in Catania in 1920. The principal influences on the young Vitaliano were Fascism and dannunzianesimo. After graduating in 1929, Brancati 'fled' to Rome where he felt that he could contribute with his writing to the glorification of the nation. In 1936, disillusioned with Fascism, he retreated to a teaching post in Sicily, finding there the inspiration for his anti-heroic writing. During the Second World War, he returned to a full-time literary career, which he pursued until his premature death in 1954. Sciascia, whose early life is described in the first section of La Sicilia come metafora, in which he replies to the question 'Chi è Leonardo Sciascia?', was born in Racalmuto, Agrigento, in 1921, and died in Palermo in 1989. The son of an office worker, Sciascia was privileged in comparison with the miners' and peasants' children he grew up with, but the family's fragile security was only recently acquired, the author's paternal grandfather having begun his working life as a 'caruso' in the sulphur mines. Sciascia did not receive a university education, and instead began work in the 'Ufficio dell'ammasso del grano' in Racalmuto, before becoming a primary school teacher in 1948. It was not until the publication of Le parrocchie di Regalpetra in 1956 that Sciascia emerged as a writer.

It is interesting to note a certain parallelism between what De Roberto represented for the young Brancati, and what Brancati, in turn, later represented for Sciascia. Brancati wrote his tesi di laurea on the subject of 'Federico De

Roberto critico, psicologo e novelliere' (1929), and elsewhere described how, from his few meetings in Catania with the older writer, he was left with the memory of the other's intellectual meticulousness (15). Sciascia was a pupil at the Istituto Magistrale 'IX maggio' in Caltanissetta when Brancati taught there in 1937 and, although there was no intimacy between the two, Sciascia described how important to him, as a youth with cultural aspirations, the writer's presence had been, especially as Brancati's works were a denunciation of provincial society under the fascist regime and represented, therefore, a breath of liberty in a doubly-oppressive atmosphere (16). A further bio-bibliographical 'coincidence' linking the three authors is their friendship with the dialect poet Francesco Guglielmino, whose collection Ciuri di strata ('Fiori di strada') was published in three editions, with introductions by De Roberto (1922), Brancati (1948) and, thirty years later, by Sciascia (17). These 'coincidences', while not, by themselves, justifying the following discussion of the three authors together, do confirm, to some extent, the existence of certain shared interests.

This study is not an attempt to impose on the works of these three writers a single and definitive reading, but aims to trace a number of elements which they would seem to have in common and to offer some explanation for these similarities. It consists of an intensive analysis of two novels by De Roberto in which the theme of power plays a central role, and of a large number of narrative and dramatic works by the other two writers (including some of

Sciascia's imaginative reconstructions of historical events), and, particularly in the cases of the two later writers, makes reference to their journalistic production. On the whole, the works have been analysed in chronological order of publication.

NOTES

- (1) The following general studies have proved helpful: John Gatt-Rutter, Writers and Politics in Modern Italy, London, 1978; Writers and Society in Contemporary Italy. A Collection of Essays, edited by Michael Caesar and Peter Hainsworth, Leamington Spa, 1984; JoAnn Cannon, Postmodern Italian Fiction. The Crisis of Reason in Calvino, Eco, Sciascia, Malerba, Cranbury, New Jersey, 1989.
- (2) Giovanni Verga, I Malavoglia, edited by M. D. Woolf, Manchester, 1972, p. 5; my italics. See also the introduction to Verga's L'amante di Gramigna, in Vita dei campi (1880), now in Tutte le novelle, 2 vols, Milan, 1975, I, pp. 199-205 (pp. 199-201).
- (3) Federico De Roberto, Processi verbali, Palermo, 1976, p. 3.
- (4) Leonardo Sciascia, Todo modo, 'Nuovi coralli', sixth edition, Turin, 1980, p. 3.
- (5) Erich Auerbach, Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, translated by Willard R. Trask, Princeton, 1968, p. 457.
- (6) Leonardo Sciascia, Stendhal e la Sicilia, Palermo, 1984, pp. 37-8 (p. 38). See also the author's comments in Nero su nero, Turin, 1979, pp. 124-6.
- (7) John Cottingham, Rationalism, London, 1984, pp. 13-16.
- (8) Immanuel Kant, Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung? quoted in Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialettica dell'illuminismo, translated by Renato Solmi, Turin, 1966, p. 87.
- (9) For a discussion of this aspect of Italian Enlightenment thought and its relation to one of the authors discussed below, see my article 'I piaceri del dissenso: Brancati and the spirit of Illuminismo', Bulletin of the Society for Italian Studies, no. 17 (1984), 49-58.
- (10) Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory. An Introduction, Oxford, 1983, p. 131. See also Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (1980), London and New York, 1988, pp. 136-7.
- (11) See John Gatt-Rutter on the perpetuation of the impotence of literature (Writers and Politics, pp. 11-15).
- (12) Francesco Lanza, Mimi siciliani, with an introduction by Italo Calvino, Palermo, 1971, pp. ix-xxi (p. x).
- (13) Il Politecnico, reprinted Turin, 1975. See also Elio Vittorini, Diario in pubblico, Milan, 1976.
- (14) Gianni Grana examined De Roberto's aristocratic credentials in an attempt to free the author and his works from what the critic saw as the incorrect label of 'piccolo-

borghese', attached to them by Tomasi di Lampedusa and Luigi Russo (Gianni Grana, 'De Roberto aristocratico-borghese', L'osservatore politico-letterario, 28, no. 8 (August 1982), 66-76, now in Federico De Roberto, edited by Sarah Zappulla Muscarà, Palermo, 1984, pp. 27-35 (p. 30).

(15) 'Un letterato d'altri tempi' (1947), and 'Scrupoli d'altri tempi' (1948); both now in Vitaliano Brancati, Il borghese e l'immensità. Scritti 1930-54, edited by S. De Feo and G. A. Cibotto, Milan, 1973, pp. 223-5 and pp. 265-9.

(16) See, for example, Sciascia's comments on Brancati in the article, 'A lezione di libertà con Brancati', supplement to La Stampa, 13 October 1984.

(17) Francesco Guglielmino, Ciuri di strata, Palermo, 1978: the two previous introductory notes are also reprinted in this edition.

Chapter 2: Federico De Roberto.

The narrative of Federico De Roberto has frequently been compared to the works of other Sicilian writers on the basis of superficial similarities, and, as a consequence, has not always been judged as objectively as it might have been. The inclusion of De Roberto in the so-called triade of Sicilian veristi, alongside Giovanni Verga (1840-1922) and Luigi Capuana (1839-1915), has cast him in the role of a pupil of these two: in these terms, only a critic determined to prove a point regardless of the evidence could draw De Roberto's work out of the shadow of Verga's (1). More recently, the comparison of De Roberto's I Vicerè (1894), with its focus on the grotesque, to Tomasi di Lampedusa's lyrical Il Gattopardo (1957), both of which describe the Sicilian aristocracy during the period of transition from the Bourbon regime to the kingdom of Italy, inevitably did the earlier novel no favours.

If such comparisons have placed an emphasis on what is lacking in De Roberto's writing, the other most commonly adopted approach to his works has frequently led critics to judge these subjectively on the basis of the correspondence or otherwise of the author's view of history to that determined by their own ideological loyalties. It is not unreasonable to suggest, for example, that Croce's condemnation on apparently aesthetic grounds of I Vicerè, which he described summarily as 'un'opera pesante, che non illumina l'intelletto come non fa mai battere il cuore', be attributed instead to the divergence of the critic's historical outlook from that of De Roberto (2). To a certain extent, Croce could not have been expected not to dislike I

Vicerè, since one of the principal achievements of the novel is the dispersal of the myth of the Risorgimento as the creator of a truly democratic liberal state, an Italy one and undivided, while much of Croce's historical writing was dedicated to the furtherance of just such a myth, although, to be fair to him, it should be noted that the mythicizing of the age of liberal Italy was, at the time, a critical statement on the Fascist regime which followed it.

In an article published in La Repubblica on the fiftieth anniversary of De Roberto's death, Sciascia commented on Croce's dismissal of I Vicerè, linking it to a prevalent refusal to acknowledge the contradiction between the ideals and the achievements of the Risorgimento, a contradiction which remained concealed 'o dalla volontà di non lasciare cadere le illusioni o da una specie di omertà, piuttosto diffusa nella "letteratura della nuova Italia", che nel fascismo finirà col trovare il suo alveo congeniale' (3). It is true that the main currents of Italian historiography up to and including the writings of Croce had presented the Risorgimento in an heroic light, as an episode in a modern 'storia della libertà', and Croce's historical works can be seen as part of the propaganda with which liberal Italy hoped to carry its political revolution to a successful conclusion (4).

Whatever the nature, scope and effect of this 'omertà', it is possible to trace a defiance of it in post-Unification Sicilian narrative, where one constantly finds a portrayal of a reality which contradicts the myths created in the historical writings. For this reason, it is worth spending

some time putting De Roberto's work into the context of the interpretation of the Risorgimento which can be found in that narrative. It has been suggested, for example, that 'sul piano letterario la politicità dell'opera verghiana consiste proprio nella scelta veristica della sua poetica', insofar as this implies a rejection, on the one hand, of 'l'oratoria socialista' and, on the other, of 'la retorica patriottarda', without giving in to 'sentimentalismo umanitario' (5). While, for example, historians of various tendencies would have it that violent uprisings against the local ruling classes in Sicily were either sporadic incidents produced by extrinsic propaganda, or else symptoms of a fundamentally political class hatred, Verga's Libertà, based on the bloody vendetta waged by the popolani, the 'berretti' of the small town of Bronte on the slopes of Etna, on their masters, the 'cappelli', suggests that, without being a rationally-conceived political revolt, the massacre was indicative of spontaneous and deep-felt resentment of the prepotenze perpetrated over generations (6). In his analysis of Verga's racconto, Sciascia provided further documentation of apolitical peasant anarchism, as expressed in a harvest song from the Modica area of south-east Sicily, first transcribed by Serafino Amabile Guastella in 1876, and described by Sciascia as the result of the conditions in which the peasant was kept by 'gli altri - dal nobile allo sbirro, dal prete al conciapelli' (7).

A further example of a Sicilian writer's rejection of the myths of the Risorgimento can be found in Pirandello's novel, I vecchi e i giovani (1913), in which the author

denounced the betrayal of the - probably misplaced - ideals and aspirations associated with the movement for the unification of Italy. In I vecchi e i giovani, the scandal of the Banca Romana (1892-3) and the formation and subsequent violent repression of the 'Fasci siciliani dei lavoratori' (1892-4) exemplify the shortcomings - political, economic, social and moral - of the newly-created Italian national state (8).

De Roberto's novel, I Vicerè and its unrevised sequel, L'Imperio, published posthumously in 1929 (9), fit into this tradition of denunciation of the failings of the Risorgimento. I Vicerè, as has been indicated above, was published in 1894, the year in which a conservative government, led by the Sicilian politician, Francesco Crispi (1819-1901), reversed the position of its discredited liberal predecessor with a military response to the social unrest in Sicily, thus satisfying the demands of the Sicilian landlords and mine-owners, and of frightened conservative forces throughout Italy, for tough action. The novel, written in the period later described by Pirandello, might be seen, therefore, as an indication of a widespread atmosphere of disillusionment current at that time: one critic has even described I Vicerè as the first serious attempt at a reappraisal of the effects of the Risorgimento on the South, and as

la protesta d'un liberale del Sud contro la classe dirigente del Sud, l'esplosione d'un crudo disinganno di fronte a quella grande illusione tradita che fu per il Sud il 1860, la denuncia più coraggiosa del trasformismo del mondo politico meridionale. (10)

This analysis, while basically sound, errs, perhaps, in the emphasis it places on what it describes as the novel's 'carica meridionalista' (Pomilio, p. 174), and in the extent to which De Roberto's disillusionment is couched in the terms of the critic's own ideology, an excess which can probably be attributed, as the article appeared in 1960, to a desire to counter the rhetoric of centenary celebrations. My analysis of I Vicerè and L'Imperio will indicate the relationship between the author's historical disillusionment, as outlined by Pomilio and others (11), and a profound aversion to the workings of power, which emerges from these novels and from what is known of De Roberto's personal involvement in politics (12).

The very title of I Vicerè (like, of course, that of L'Imperio) indicates the central role of the theme of power: it is first mentioned in a letter of 1891, in which the author substitutes it for the title, Vecchia razza, he had originally intended to give it, and this decision causes a slight shift in emphasis from the naturalistic theme of 'il decadimento fisico e morale d'una stirpe esausta' to that of the power exercised by the family (13). Significantly, before any mention of the political events of the Risorgimento, in which, to different degrees, the various members of the Uzeda family are to be involved during the course of the novel, the author alludes to the power of the family of 'i Vicerè': the opening tableau, in which one of the family servants is seen holding his baby up to the marble coat of arms above the entrance to the Uzeda palace and showing him the racks where, formerly, the mercenaries of the prince had

hung their weapons, introduces the theme of power with its symbolic references to the feudal dominion of the Uzedas over the society around them, while that society is represented in its weakness by the infant (14). It seems almost as though the child is being taught awe and respect from the outset, as though the reader is witnessing part of the child's conditioning to political and social subservience.

The Uzedas are the descendants of the 'vecchia razza spagnuola, dei Vicerè che avevano spogliato la Sicilia' (15), while donna Teresa (mother of Suor Maria Crocifissa, born Angiolina, of Chiara, Giacomo, Lodovico, Raimondo, Ferdinando and Lucrezia) has brought to the family the less ancient but no less imposing 'bisogno di comando, d'autorità' instilled in her by her father, barone Risà di Niscemi (p. 61), and which she, in turn, transmits to her son, Giacomo (p. 90). One of the principal characteristics of the Uzedas, and fruit of this pedigree, is the desire each of them has to assert his or her own will (16): indeed, on one level, I Vicerè is the story of the Uzedas efforts to undo the work of donna Teresa by defying her tyrannical impositions and opposing her will with their own, and it is this fact which prompted Sciascia to suggest that, although the reader learns of donna Teresa's death on the very first page of the novel, she could in fact be considered its protagonist ('Perché Croce aveva torto'; see note (3) above). So, where donna Teresa had wilfully broken family tradition by marrying her favoured third son, Raimondo, to Matilde Palmi, when he was destined to the cloth, all those members of the family who do not have particular interests

to the contrary contribute to the dissolution of this marriage, either as a means of furthering their own interests, as in the case of Giacomo (pp. 340-2), or, like donna Ferdinanda and don Blasco, simply for the pleasure of acting in contrast to the wishes of their sister-in-law, donna Teresa (p. 284; p. 342): they achieve their ends by encouraging Raimondo's affair with Isabella Fersa, while Giacomo subsequently exploits his brother's obstinacy with his public disapproval of the relationship, which he knows will only spur Raimondo on in his actions (p. 347).

By withholding his influential approval of Raimondo's divorce and remarriage - a formality since, in reality, he is totally indifferent to questions of conventional morality - not only does Giacomo provoke his brother to persist in pursuing a course of action which contrasts with Raimondo's own desire for complete freedom, he also achieves a greater victory over his late mother, who, 'per far passare la propria volontà su tutte le leggi umane e divine' (p. 62), had completed her earlier contravention of tradition by making the two brothers co-heirs. Only when Raimondo accepts a settlement in Giacomo's favour does the latter demonstrate, and allow his family to demonstrate, approval of the new ménage (pp. 354-6). In Giacomo, the 'bisogno di comando' is linked, as it is in his aunt, donna Ferdinanda, and in his uncles, don Gaspare - the duca d'Oragua - and don Blasco, with the desire to accumulate wealth. While in these members of the older generation such avarice and the longing to command can be, if not justified, at least explained by their virtual exclusion as cadets from inheritance of wealth

or authority, in Giacomo, 'esercitare la propria autorità di capo della casa' and 'afferrare la roba' (p. 90) represent almost existential needs, which he satisfies with a brutal tyranny and by despoiling not only Raimondo, but all his peers, either with sanctions similar to those imposed on Raimondo, or by simple fraud, and he is not afraid even of falsifying don Blasco's will (pp. 488-92).

This insatiable longing for wealth is the motivating force, in one way or another, of almost all the Uzedas, who, morally, know no middle ground, and are

o sfrenatamente amanti dei piaceri e dissipatori come il principe Giacomo XIII e il contino Raimondo; o interessati, avari, spilorci, capaci di vender l'anima per un baiocco, come il principe Giacomo XIV e donna Ferdinanda. (p. 93)

Wealth commands the respect of the Uzedas, hence the authority of the duca d'Oragua, of donna Ferdinanda and, after the dissolution of the monastery and his creation of a personal fortune, of don Blasco: hence, conversely, the lack of consideration for don Eugenio and Ferdinando and for their ideas. Material advantage dictates loyalties in the world of the Uzedas, corrupting the environment to such an extent that no one believes in a disinterested action: even Matilde, whose love for Raimondo is truly a romantic ideal, is accused of marrying him for his wealth and title (pp. 57-8).

It is the loss of favour in this material sense which elicits the criticism of the family from the various parasites and lackeys displaced by the change of regime after the death of donna Teresa: don Gaspare, the coachman, whose interests are tied to the faction of the late princess

and Raimondo and who is sure, therefore, of losing his post, gives vent to his emotion in a denunciation of the discord of the Uzedas (pp. 5-6); so, too, does don Casimiro Scaglisi (p. 34), who has already forfeited his position as one of the family parasites due to Giacomo's belief in his power as a 'iettatore', and whose criticism extends to accusing the prince of the misappropriation of money and documents on his mother's death (p. 29), and the whole family of political opportunism (pp. 32-3). Even if these accusations are subsequently shown to be accurate, De Roberto shows that those who make them are governed by interests, so that the truth is spoken only by 'i rimasti a mani vuote' (p. 32).

Don Casimiro suggests that the politics of the Uzedas are determined by the desire to safeguard the interests of the family: "In questa casa chi fa il rivoluzionario e chi il borbonico; così sono certi di trovarsi bene, qualunque cosa avvenga!" (pp. 32-3). However, this is only partly true, since it implies a concerted line of action, the possibility of which the author, with his sceptical opinion of the world of power, denies his characters. The politics of each member of the family depend entirely on his or her own personal interests, and any alliance, either within the family or in the outside world, is undertaken solely with these in mind. Thus, if the duca d'Oragua is the epitome of the political ambivalence hinted at by the disgruntled ex-parasite, it is in the hope of satisfying his personal 'smania d'arricchire e di farsi valere nel mondo' (p. 102), not with the sense of any need to preserve the privileges of his household, that he cautiously plays 'la carta della libertà' (p. 107): if he

professes a faith in liberal ideals and makes a show of giving the cause his financial support, while not disdaining the confidence of the Bourbon authorities (pp. 102-7), he is inspired to do so by his envy of his elder brother, the late prince Consalvo VII (p. 102). In the same way, it is to protect and further his personal interests that the duca d'Oragua, whose political conversion remains as superficial as his exchange of his 'bel collare di barba alla borbonica' for a 'pizzo' (p. 43),

stava al bivio, dava ragione un po' a tutti: al principe che gli offriva ospitalità e lo trattava con deferenza, a Lucrezia che amando e sposando il nipote del cospiratore Giulente, lo avrebbe aiutato ad entrar meglio nelle grazie dei liberali. (p. 107)

Similarly, Giacomo assumes a bland political position between the Bourbon sympathies of donna Ferdinanda and the feigned liberalism of his uncle in the hope of inheriting the wealth of both.

The duca d'Oragua's brother, don Blasco, from his position of vehement defender of the legitimacy of the Bourbons while these guarantee the privileged life-style of the Benedictine monks, adopts a more flexible line when, after the suppression of the monastery of San Nicola by the new government, he is able to obtain a private share of the collective wealth of the religious institution (pp. 420-1, 433-4). His reconciliation with his 'revolutionary' brother (pp. 436-7) and his participation in the celebrations for the taking of Rome in 1870 (pp. 449-52) are merely superficial demonstrations, masking his real self-interested apoliticism: 'A don Blasco importava adesso un fico secco se

il Re chiamavasi Francesco o Vittorio; ché, entrato nella casa di San Nicola, ci stava da papa' (p. 434).

Giacomo's son, Consalvo also enters politics with purely personal interests in mind, notwithstanding the lesson received as a child from his father regarding the significance to the family of the duca d'Oragua's election to parliament ("Quando c'erano i Vicerè, i nostri erano Vicerè; adesso che abbiamo il Parlamento, lo zio è deputato!" p. 269), and notwithstanding the fact that, in justification of his own betrayal of the Bourbon monarchy and his election on a radical ticket, he claims to donna Ferdinanda that he is merely exploiting the new political order to protect the interests of his caste (pp. 647-51). Consalvo's motivation is the same individual 'bisogno di comando, d'autorità' that inspired his grandmother and his father, exasperated, however, by his humiliation during his travels outside Sicily, where his aristocratic titles were insufficient to save him from ignominious anonymity (pp. 478-80). The purpose behind his political activity, therefore, is the satisfaction of this appetite through the acquisition of 'la notorietà e la supremazia non in una sola regione o sopra una sola casta ma in tutta la nazione e su tutti' (p. 482).

In the society dominated by the Uzeda family, whose members are incapable of conceiving an action not inspired by selfish motives, the liberal faith of don Lorenzo Giulente is attributed to the fact that his family, in its desire to emulate the true aristocracy, had deprived him of his share of the family's wealth by making his elder brother the sole heir. Doubt is expressed as to the sincerity of the

political position of don Lorenzo and of his nephew, Benedetto, in a passage in which the technique of erlebte Rede, if it is used at all, does not serve, as elsewhere in the novel, to cast an equivocal light on the comments being made (note, for example, the various remarks in free indirect speech which, nonetheless, clearly belong to the self-interested don Blasco), but rather to attribute the opinions to society in general:

Don Paolo, il padre di Benedetto, era ricchissimo, mentre don Lorenzo non possedeva un baiocco: per questo, forse, trespava coi rivoluzionari. Benedetto, un po' per l'esempio dello zio, un po' pel soffio dei nuovi tempi, faceva anch'egli il liberale. (p. 82; my italics)

Unlike the criticism levelled against the Uzedas, or other examples of direct criticism of the Giulentes by interested parties (the passage above is followed, for example, by a comment by donna Ferdinanda accusing them of envy), here the suggestion is given a more 'objective' value, perhaps indicative of a belief that involvement in politics is always dictated by ulterior motives, which, as will be seen below, did indeed haunt the author. In any case, it does raise doubts about the motives of uncle and nephew, which the subsequent statement, describing Benedetto as 'veramente un buon giovane, studioso, un po' esaltato, infiammato dalle dottrine liberali dello zio, bruciante d'amore per l'Italia' (p. 84), does not entirely dispel and which subsequent developments tend to confirm.

In his view of Sicilian society at the time of the Risorgimento, De Roberto presents an image of a bourgeoisie which, if it is no longer totally dependent on the 'feudal'

aristocracy, neither is it in a strong enough position to fulfil its ambition of replacing the nobility, or of taking up a place alongside it. As a consequence, its representatives - and, in I Vicerè, Benedetto Giulente is the only member of his class to be dealt with in any detail (while there is a brief mention of an avvocato Vazza who, by 1882, has built up a vast electoral clientela, pp. 613-14) - are drawn into compromise with the aristocracy in an attempt to share power. De Roberto shows such compromise to be self-deluding, however, since the political naivety of the bourgeoisie, represented by Giulente, lays it open to exploitation by the class which has the political experience acquired during centuries of rule. Giulente believes that he has the situation well in hand, that his support of the duca d'Oragua is on his own terms and will assure him 'l'eredità politica', the latter's seat in parliament (pp. 414-15). This illusion, which don Gaspare is happy to foster in exchange for the other's services (p. 366), tempts Giulente to sacrifice his scruples and the romantic ideals he has previously proclaimed. He does this first within the Uzeda family as a means of obtaining their acceptance:

Per ingraziarsi tutti quegli Uzeda egli ne secondava e incoraggiava le pretese; ma, dall'orgoglio di frequentare la loro casa, dalla superbia di imparentarsi con essi, accettava quella parte, sposava sinceramente le cause dei futuri parenti. (p. 277)

Such self-interested sincerity cannot but taint his espousal of the ideals of the Risorgimento. Later, Benedetto consciously suppresses his moral objections to the breaking up of Raimondo's marriage to Matilde, when to do so will bring

him advantage: 'All'idea di contentare sua moglie, di cattivarsi la fiducia, la stima e la gratitudine dei parenti sentiva ammorzarsi a poco a poco i rimorsi' (17). Gradually, however, this practice has been carried over into the political sphere as Benedetto denies Garibaldi, like Peter denying Christ, three times in three hours (p. 327), abandons his radical ideals as a means of ingratiating himself with the conservative duca d'Oragua and in the hope of succeeding him in parliament (p. 366), and allows himself to be drawn into a network of corruption (p. 414).

With their innate ability to manipulate and dominate others, the Uzeda family, and above all don Gaspare, see Giulente as a resource to be exploited to the full for their own benefit. The young man's injury at the battle of the Volturmo accords him the status and respect of a hero of the patriotic cause, so the duca d'Oragua is keen to be associated with him in the people's minds, as a screen for his own cowardice: on Giulente's triumphant return to Catania, while his parents weep with emotion, don Gaspare 'kidnaps' him and drives off with him to the town hall 'fra un'onda di popolo acclamante' (p. 244). Subsequently, the young orator is always on hand to compensate, with his flair for rhetoric, for don Gaspare's shortcomings in this area (pp. 268-9): it could be said that the duca d'Oragua misappropriates the other's rational discourse. The nomination of Giulente as mayor, which he is led to believe is a foretaste of the greater honour that awaits him (pp. 409-10), is, in fact, simply a ploy to enable the duca d'Oragua to impose his will on the city administration without

exposing himself to the criticism of his enemies, and to turn it into 'un'agenzia elettorale, una fabbrica di clienti' (pp. 413-14). Consalvo humours Giulente by allowing the latter to show him the ropes of the administration and to treat him as his own protégé (pp. 484-7), only to brush his aunt's husband aside later on in the electoral campaign of 1882. The Uzeda family's sense of superiority and exaggerated pride in their own nobility never permits them to accept Giulente fully as one of them, but this does not prevent Giacomo, donna Ferdinanda - whose 'vanità nobiliare' is so great as to be described as an illness (p. 97) - or Raimondo from availing themselves of his legal expertise when it serves their interests (p. 277; pp. 303-4; pp. 346-7). Giulente blindly acquiesces in his relations with the Uzeda clan, and it is left to his wife, Lucrezia, to offer him the vain warning that her family is squeezing him like a lemon and, by implication, will discard him once he is no longer of use to them (p. 414).

De Roberto's portrait of the Risorgimento in Sicily shows its participants to be largely self-interested. As demonstrated above, doubt is cast on Benedetto Giulente's motives and on those of his uncle don Lorenzo, who is even described as 'un liberale arrabbiato - naturalmente, non essendo signore' (p. 221: the definition in free indirect speech can be attributed to Garino, one of don Blasco's parasites). Those novices at San Nicola who welcome the liberal 'revolution', do so for selfish reasons: to Giovannino Radali-Uzeda the triumph of the liberals means the suppression of the monastery and his return to society, from

which his mother has excluded him in an effort to maximise her elder son's inheritance (p. 236). Another revolutionary seen in a bad light is the son of cavaliere Calasaro who, forced to go into exile in Turin after the revolt of the Quarantotto, ruins his father with his continual requests for money (p. 96). The only liberal in I Vicerè whose political faith is not tainted by personal interests is barone Palmi, Raimondo's father-in-law, described as 'liberale d'antica data', who goes into exile in Malta for his part in the Quarantotto (p. 101). Even Palmi, however, avails himself of the help of influential friends to shorten his exile, and he, too, is shown to be susceptible to vanity, to the 'folle orgoglio d'essersi imparentato con uno dei Vicerè' (p. 296). Besides, it is not the political aspect of this character which is focussed on in the novel, but his blind love for his daughter, Matilde (p. 115).

As mentioned above, Croce cast doubt on the historical reliability of De Roberto's bleak account in I Vicerè of the years which saw the formation and establishment of the Italian State (18), and, in the wake of Croce, the author's views on the Risorgimento were dismissed as the result of his 'pessimismo storico' (19). Sciascia preferred to describe I Vicerè as the product of 'una delusione, se non addirittura di una disperazione storica', emphasizing De Roberto's experience of the effects of the Risorgimento in Sicily, and not only his temperament ('Perché Croce aveva torto'). Certainly, De Roberto's picture suggests an innate weakness in the Risorgimento in the form it took in Sicily - the misappropriation of the 'revolution' by the aristocracy,

with the unwitting collaboration in this process of a politically-immature bourgeoisie - and can be seen to coincide to a great extent with the much-debated negative concept of rivoluzione mancata, as defined by historians later (20).

Whether the origin of the view of history presented in I Vicerè was pessimism or disillusionment on the part of the author, what emerges from the novel, as has already been suggested above, is De Roberto's aversion to the whole concept of power. It might be argued that at the root of this aversion is the fact that power, as seen by De Roberto, is fundamentally unrelated to the values of liberal humanist reason, in the context of which the author worked.

In the novel, power in its various forms is represented by the Uzeda family, as has been demonstrated above: that 'reason' is alien to the family is made quite clear throughout the novel, beginning with the exclamation, '"Razza di matti, questi Francalanza!'" (p. 7), attributed in this instance to a passer-by but, as will be shown below, repeated on various occasions in slightly different forms by one or other member of the family as a reproof when the others contravene his or her personal idea of rational behaviour. This madness, part of the 'decadimento fisico e morale' of the Uzedas, manifests itself in the obsessions which De Roberto allots the various members of the family. In Giacomo, it takes the form of 'una folle paura della iettatura' (p. 41); in his wife, Margherita, that of a kind of nervous illness which renders intolerable to her any contact with other people or with things touched by them (p. 17),

which is inherited by Consalvo (and by literary descendants in Brancati's Gli anni perduti (1938) and Sciascia's Il contesto (1971), where, as will be shown in the following chapters, the irrational has a similar significance). Chiara's frustrated desire to become a mother is an obsession which obscures all other considerations, while the absent-mindedness of Lucrezia is a source of constant amusement to the company (p. 79). Insanity is the destiny of don Eugenio and his illegitimate half-brother, fra' Carmelo, of don Mario Radali-Uzeda and of Ferdinando, but none of the Uzedas is entirely free of 'una stravaganza di concetti' (p. 118).

De Roberto's principal demonstration of the vulnerability of reason to the pressures placed on it by power is in his portrayal of the corruption and misappropriation of rational discourse in the world of the Uzedas. This theme appears in De Roberto's constant play on the meanings of the word 'ragione' and its derivatives: foremost among these is the idea of 'le ragioni dell'interesse' (p. 122). The duca d'Oragua 'dava ragione un po' a tutti' (p. 107), so as to remain in favour with everyone without committing himself to anything. If Giacomo 'aveva dato ragione' to his uncle don Blasco in the struggle against donna Teresa, he did so out of neither love nor respect, but rather 'per semplice tornaconto': in fact, 'aveva obbedito a sue proprie ragioni' (p. 85). This is no different, however, to the practice of don Blasco, who, in the rivalries between his nephews and nieces, avoids assuming a fixed position which would prevent him from subsequently redefining 'ragione': 'Non avrebbe

potuto più dar torto a chi prima aveva dato ragione, e viceversa; e questo era per lui un bisogno' (pp. 84-5).

This habit of constantly shifting the boundaries which define reason or reasonable behaviour is characteristic, above all, of don Blasco, 'che quando qualcuno gli dava ragione egli mutava opinione per dargli torto' (p. 66). He is the most vehement critic of the rationality of the other members of the family, censuring them, for example, when they assert their own will and break with tradition, which he elevates on such occasions to the role of trustee of reason: '"Così fanno tutti coloro che ragionano, eh?... Ma in questa casa la logica era un'altra!"' (p. 40); 'Ammogliare un altro figliuolo? Creare una seconda famiglia? Venir meno alle tradizioni della casa? C'era esempio d'una pazzia più furiosa?' (p. 91). As the narrator points out, however, this form of reasoning does not prevent don Blasco from bearing an unquenchable rancour towards those same traditions which were earlier imposed on him (21).

Lucrezia, too, criticizes her family for their irrational behaviour, but her own recommendation to her betrothed sounds like an inverted warning about the treatment he will receive from her in future: '"Non dar loro retta: sono tutti pazzi! Senza ragione ti odiano, senza ragione un bel giorno faranno pace!"' (pp. 275-6). Indeed, having overcome the opposition of her family and married Giulente, she then finds fault with him for the very reasons previously put forward by them (pp. 325-6). Her continual unjustified contradiction of his every word and action ends only when Benedetto finally opens his eyes to the way in which her

family have exploited him and, in a moment of rage, reacts to her taunts by striking her, at which point she is transformed: 'Quasi che il suo torbido cervello avesse bisogno d'una scossa materiale per funzionare regolarmente, ella disse subito tra sè: "Ha ragione!"' (pp. 607-9). De Roberto is not, one imagines, suggesting here that physical violence is a means of asserting reason, but rather that Lucrezia, denied access by her environment to rational discourse and behaviour, is capable only of understanding an abuse of force.

De Roberto's examination of the dependence of reason on power includes examples of what can now be identified as the gender implications of the two terms. Matilde's love for Raimondo, for example, can be seen in this light: 'Ella gli diede ragione, soggiogata come sempre dalla volontà di lui' (p. 218) and, likewise, her promises to be 'ragionevole' imply total submission to her husband's will (p. 331). Margherita, too, is crushed by the patriarchal system, forbidden by her husband even to hold opinions (p. 292), since reason is subject to power and therefore a male reserve. Similarly, reason is adopted by power as an argument against Lucrezia's marriage (p. 208) and in favour of Teresa marrying her cousin, the duca Michele, rather than his younger brother, the barone Giovannino, whom she loves (p. 537). As a child, Teresa's submissiveness to the will of her father had been praised as a demonstration of 'saggezza' (p. 299). De Roberto points to the manipulation of reason by power, represented in these instances by the patriarch (22).

Other elements of the discourse of reason undergo a

similar corruption in the mouths of the Uzedas: in the world depicted by De Roberto, the terms 'liberty' and 'justice', like 'reason', are inscribed in the ideology of power. An example of this is the way in which, as seen above, the decision of the duca d'Oragua to play 'la carta della libertà' is not based on a patriotic or political ideal of freedom, but on calculation as to the course of action most likely to give him the possibility to satisfy his desire to amass a fortune. The object of Raimondo's aspirations are 'i liberi piaceri mondani' (p. 119), in which the idea of freedom assumes the particular form of libertinism.

The conception of justice and the legitimate shared by all the Uzedas is the product of the family's uncontested dominion over the society in which they live. 'Chi poteva negare ai Vicerè ciò che essi volevano. La loro volontà non doveva essere legge per tutti?' (p. 346): used as they are to their will becoming law, they naturally come to identify 'justice' with that will. This is best exemplified by the episode of the dissolution of Raimondo and Isabella Fersa's marriages, caused by the upbringing of the former, who, as his mother's favourite, 'faceva legge dei propri capricci' (p. 85). When Lucrezia speaks of Raimondo's situation, she adopts and corrupts the language of justice based on reason, stating what is only natural for her: '"Bisogna pensare a legittimarla, sciogliendo i matrimoni... Meglio mettersi in regola con la legge e la società!"' (p. 346). Lucrezia and Ferdinando can only respond to Giulente's attempt to draw them back to a conception of justice based on reason by reasserting the natural legitimacy of their argument: '"Se i

matrimoni sono sciolti di fatto, perché non scioglierli di diritto?"' (p. 347). Don Blasco, with characteristic incoherence, takes up Raimondo's cause, which for him represents a means of attacking Giacomo and of undoing the work of donna Teresa (p. 342), and, abusing rational discourse and rhetoric, offers 'clamorose dimostrazioni della convenienza, della giustizia, della necessità di quell'annullamento di matrimoni' (p. 351): at the same time, he criticizes Giacomo for opposing his brother, accusing him of 'stramberia' and 'prepotenza', thus providing yet more examples of the corruption of reason and justice as terms of reference. The episode ends, inevitably, with Raimondo obtaining 'justice' from the court (p. 359).

The whole concept of rational culture is undermined in the world of the Uzedas. Of donna Teresa it is said that "sapeva leggere soltanto nel libro delle devozioni e in quello dei conti!"' (p. 25), and although both she and donna Ferdinanda are, to some extent, pioneers in overcoming the prejudice of their class against women being able to read (p. 98), their culture is principally an aid to their speculations. Apart from her accounts, donna Ferdinanda's other text is the Teatro genologico di Sicilia by Mugnòs: the references to the 'caratteri sgraziati ed oscuri' and 'ortografia fantastica' of the text serve to emphasize its symbolic value as a corruption of culture, yet donna Ferdinanda sees in it the gospel of nobility (p. 97).

The cultural pretensions and manifest ignorance of don Eugenio are further signs of this corruption: his obsession with art, archaeology and history is dictated by a greed

equal to that of his sister and brothers, and its ultimate object is 'un gran colpo capace di arricchirlo' (p. 143). In the more than suspect culture of don Eugenio, it is possible to see a literary antecedent to the intellectual environment of Natàca in Brancati's Gli anni perduti, analysed in the following chapter (23). The enterprise of Sciascia's abate Vella in Il Consiglio d'Egitto (1963) bears a strong resemblance to don Eugenio's heraldic literature, in which, initially, he manipulates historical fact by suppressing too precise references in order to extend noble origins to families who by chance share their names with members of the genuine aristocracy (p. 510), but subsequently subverts history completely by attributing noble titles to whoever is prepared to pay (24). It could be argued that these similarities are indicative of a view of a fundamentally irrational world, shared by the three writers (25).

In the figure of Ferdinando, De Roberto shows the total undermining of the Enlightenment tradition of scientific method. His counter-productive efforts to improve his land are the results of his 'sciocche manie', of a smattering of scientific knowledge obtained from his disordered reading and combined with his own extravagant ideas (pp. 75-6). Having ruined the land, he dedicates himself to mechanical experiments and, despite his failure to construct a simple water-pump that works, his innate arrogance pushes him to turn his attentions to the problem of perpetual motion (26). His hypochondria, too, is the effect of his indiscriminate reading on his weak mind (pp. 343-5), while his premature death is caused by his subsequent irrational refusal to

recognize the symptoms of a serious illness and, ultimately, by his refusal to eat, obsessed as he is with the idea that his family, in reality Prussian spies, are attempting to poison him (pp. 440-9)!

In the world of I Vicerè, reason and its ideal derivatives, justice and liberty, are subverted by power, so that when the voice of conscience is heard denouncing the abuses of power, it is often closely associated with madness. Fra' Carmelo, with his endless lamentation over the suppression of the monastery of San Nicola, tries the patience of don Blasco, who, nevertheless, gives him money and wine. After drinking, however, 'il maniaco... ragionava meno' and, on one occasion, 'delirante più del solito', he innocently uses the second person in his diatribe against those who have bought the former possessions of the Benedictines, pricking the conscience of his host and permanently excluding himself from the benefit of the latter's charity (p. 422). When Baldassarre announces his resignation to his master, Giacomo can only ask him if he has gone mad, but the truth of the matter is that, 'dopo cinquant'anni di devozione sconfinata, di obbedienza cieca, di volontà annichilita, egli aveva espresso un'opinione', regarding the marriage of Teresa to Giovannino, only to see this opinion disregarded because of the 'stramberia' of his masters; because, that is, of the interests which affect their actions (pp. 548-9). Despite the fact that Baldassarre's decision is indeed a rebellion caused by the stirring of his stubborn Uzeda blood (he is the illegitimate half-brother of Giacomo's generation), De Roberto's lexical choice clearly juxtaposes the themes of

power and reason, demonstrating the latter's subordination to the former.

The abuse of reason by power as represented by the Uzedas is best illustrated by the figure of Consalvo. Educated from an early age in the art of pretence, Consalvo first adopts this as a means of undermining his father's satisfaction at imposing his will on the child (p. 169): later, in the political field, Consalvo gives numerous examples of his capacity for pretence, declaring one belief, then another in contrast with the first, with no scruples about contradicting his own intimate opinion (p. 511). Like that of his great-uncle, the duca d'Oragua, his involvement in politics is inspired by purely personal interests, as has been shown above: but, whereas don Gaspare belongs to that branch of the family which is incapable of understanding 'una potenza, un valore, una virtù più grande di quella dei quattrini' (p. 430), Consalvo shares the awareness of his uncle, Padre Lodovico, that there is 'un regno da conquistare' (p. 65), that in the Church or in parliament it is possible to be 'padrone degli altri' (p. 553). Consalvo is amoral, or rather, he operates outside conventional morality, and, in the same way that the other Uzedas justify their own greater or lesser transgressions of this by pointing to the examples of their peers, Consalvo bases his cynicism on his personal experience in the world of power:

Tutto era per lui quistione di tornaconto materiale o morale, immediato o avvenire. Al Noviziato aveva avuto l'esempio della sfrenata licenza dei monaci che avevano fatto voto dinanzi al loro Dio di rinunciare a tutto; in casa, nel mondo, aveva visto che ciascuno tirava a fare il proprio comodo sopra ogni cosa. Non c'era dunque nient'altro fuorché l'interesse individuale; per soddisfare il suo amor proprio egli era disposto a giovare di

tutto. (pp. 511-12)

Conscious of his own violation of 'la morale dei più', Consalvo judges himself favourably in comparison with the other members of his family.

It is in Consalvo that one also finds the most extreme example of the exploitation of rational discourse by power. The story of his conversion from profligacy to scholarship is put into context by its juxtaposition to the account of don Eugenio's attempts to market his Araldo sicolo (Part III, Chapters 1 and 2), both representing the use of culture for the furtherance of purely personal interests. In his public speeches, Consalvo usurps the discourse of patriotism, liberty and democracy (for example, pp. 486-7), while in private he acknowledges to himself that his political conversion is 'a parole soltanto' (p. 547), a phrase which points to the fragility of that discourse. He compensates for the mediocrity of his learning, which is described as 'una infarinatura di tutto,... una scienza farraginoso e indigesta' (p. 508), with the sheer volume of his argument and the number of authorities quoted. De Roberto emphasizes the value of Consalvo's culture as an instrument of power, repeatedly using the image of the public being crushed beneath his erudition (p. 508; p. 520; p. 638): on one such occasion, the narrator expresses a contempt for the people who allow themselves to be fooled in this way which could be attributed both to Consalvo and to the narrator himself:

Come un tempo aveva gettato sulla folla il suo tiro a quattro, così la schiacciava con tutto il peso della sua dottrina, e la gente che si tirava di canto, un tempo, per non restar sotto i suoi cavalli, esclamando tuttavia: 'Che bell'equipaggio!' adesso lo stava a udire, intronata

dalla sua loquela, dicendo: 'Quante cose sa!' (p. 508)

This contempt implies a degree of pessimism with regard to democracy and a critique of humanist rhetoric which was to become more explicit in L'Imperio.

De Roberto first refers specifically to L'Imperio in a letter of 7 December 1895, in which he states that he had begun writing the novel two years earlier, but that, after having written five chapters, he had been stopped by frightening difficulties (Navarria, p. 316). Subsequent references to the novel in his letters describe principally the writer's failure to make progress on it despite a desire to do so. In a series of letters from De Roberto to his mother, donna Marianna degli Asmundo (27), the author justified his stay in Rome from November 1908 to the end of 1909, by writing that he was busy collecting material for 'il romanzo', which was maturing in his mind, even if it was progressing little on the page. Francesco Bonini has suggested that the nine chapters of L'Imperio were written by the end of this sojourn (28), but, as has been mentioned above, they were only published in 1929, two years after De Roberto's death, unrevised by the author and containing numerous inconsistencies. The tortured history of the composition of this work, which Bonini has attempted to piece together by identifying historical figures and events in the novel, bears testimony to the difficulties mentioned in the author's letters: foremost among the obstacles referred to by De Roberto was his lack of familiarity with the Roman environment in which the novel is set (29); it is also possible that the author had difficulty interweaving the

adventures of his fictional characters with historical figures and events, given the much greater role these play in L'Imperio, compared to I Vicerè (30). It can, perhaps, be suggested that a further motive for De Roberto's failure to revise and publish L'Imperio was a profound crisis, the origins of which can already be found in I Vicerè and the logical, indeed the over-logical extension of which is the nihilism expressed by Ranaldi in the final chapter of L'Imperio. The analysis of L'Imperio which follows will attempt to shed light on this crisis.

The title of L'Imperio indicates clearly the author's intention to continue the discussion of the theme of power begun in I Vicerè. The title reflects the intended development from the analysis of power in the specific environment of Sicily during the years immediately preceding and following the unification of Italy, to an examination of the theme on a national scale: the shift from 'i Vicerè', representatives of the feudal system that, to a certain extent, survived in Sicily beyond the Risorgimento, to the all-embracing imperio, marks a shift towards a symbolic treatment of the theme.

L'Imperio follows Consalvo Uzeda to Rome after his electoral triumph of 1882, described in the final chapter of I Vicerè: "Il primo eletto col suffragio quasi universale non è nè un popolano, nè un borghese, nè un democratico: sono io, perché mi chiamo principe di Francalanza" (31). Consalvo obtains a personal satisfaction from the feeling that he is recognized as 'una parte del Potere' (I Vicerè, p. 33), but his ambitions will not rest until he has been

nominated Minister. The situation in Rome, however, is different from that he had experienced in Sicily: if, at the end of I Vicerè, Consalvo had proclaimed the victory of the nobility over the bourgeoisie, stating that 'il prestigio della nobiltà non è e non può essere spento' (I Vicerè, p. 648), in L'Imperio he gradually comes to regret his title, to which he attributes his inability to progress in his parliamentary career (L'Imperio, p. 130). He now envies the 'umile avvocatuccio di provincia' whom he had earlier despised (p. 33), but whose work places him at the centre of 'una rete d'interessi' which he can exploit in a system based on clientelismo. It should be noted that although this is the view presented by Consalvo and arising from his frustration, it is supported by the analysis of the parliamentary system of liberal Italy by a modern historian, who writes that the average deputato was, indeed, just such an 'avvocatuccio' with a network of clients and an interest in a local newspaper (32).

Consalvo's arrival in parliament coincides with the decisive historical moment in which Agostino Depretis (1813-87) began the process of consolidating the predominantly conservative bloc which had carried him through the first elections with extended suffrage (33). Depretis pursued a policy of trasformismo - defined by one of his collaborators as a middle line, harmonizing democratic and conservative needs (Candeloro, VI, 298) - which was ostensibly an instrument of administrative progress, but which amounted, in reality, to a series of 'puny manoeuvres for private or sectional advantage between shifting, shapeless parliamen-

tary groups' (Seton-Watson, p. 91). De Roberto's Consalvo, as he was presented in I Vicerè, is perfectly suited, therefore, to the moral environment in which he now finds himself, and he continues his amoral political ascent. In the same way that he had previously justified his actions by referring to the moral code of his family, based on greed, self-interest and prepotenza, on his arrival in Rome he recognizes that 'il suo scetticismo di piccolo provinciale era timido e innocente a paragone del cinismo di cui vedeva le prove' (L'Imperio, p. 41).

If this cynicism reassures Consalvo, Federico Ranaldi is bitterly disappointed by it. Freshly arrived in the capital, like Consalvo, he is the antithesis of the latter: the hopes placed by Ranaldi in the Italian nation are based on an almost religious belief in the myths of the Risorgimento and an idealized faith in the institution of parliament - ideas which govern his every thought and action. In the opening pages of L'Imperio, we find references to Ranaldi's idea of Montecitorio as 'il tempio dove convenivano i fedeli al culto della patria e dove se ne celebravano i riti' (p. 4), and as 'Foro della nazione, Basilica della terza Roma' (p. 11). He discovers immediately, however, that the splendour of the 'temple' is really 'di legno foderato di cartone' (p. 11), but his moral disillusionment, caused by his involvement in political journalism and his contact with Consalvo is a longer process, which begins, however, on his very first visit to Montecitorio. Ranaldi had been expecting the debate to be a noble clash of ideals between great orators, 'spinti da passioni realmente provate', in which

the future of the nation is decided (p. 21), but he witnesses instead the mediocrity and unruliness of a debate which has no influence on the eventual outcome of the vote of confidence, won by the government by dealing behind the scenes. Ranaldi's faith in the rational foundations of the institution of parliament suffers a blow when he fails to find in the debate, 'l'aspettata manifestazione di un pensiero nuovo, profondo, dominatore, sovrano' (p. 15).

The new idea encountered by Ranaldi is, instead, that of trasformismo referred to above. This is expounded to him by his protector, Satta (pp. 80-8), and is based on the blurring of the divisions between the various parliamentary parties, which, according to Satta, are more imaginary than real (p. 84). In the face of accusations of 'opportunismo' (p. 52) and 'confusionismo' (p. 85), Satta prefers to define this new morality as 'un illuminato eclettismo' (p. 86; author's italics), a choice of words demonstrating perfectly the appropriation of the language of Reason to justify power. By eliminating party and personal battles from politics, Satta claims, parliament will be able to concentrate on looking after the interests of the nation. De Roberto, however, had already discredited the idea behind trasformismo in I Vicerè, by showing its relation to baser interests:

'Pensi ancora alla destra e alla sinistra?' esclamò ridendo il duca, che aveva in tasca la formale promessa d'un seggio al Senato. 'Non vedi che i partiti vecchi sono finiti? che c'è una rivoluzione?' (I Vicerè, p. 605)

The duca d'Oragua's amusement stems, perhaps, from Giulente's naive belief that the position he had assumed in

parliament had been inspired by anything other than the desire to further his own interests, that he had acted according to political beliefs rather than the principle of ministerialismo. In the light of De Roberto's earlier work, therefore, the reader cannot help but see the irony of Satta's advocacy of the politics of trasformismo (34).

This irony escapes Ranaldi, who embraces the cause of Satta's eclecticism, seeing in it a means of creating a new parliamentary order from the mediocrity and chaos which he has witnessed, rather than an end in itself (p. 88). By the close of L'Imperio, however, he is forced to see in trasformismo the 'confusione interessata' denied by its creators at the outset (p. 91), and to recognize the self-illusory nature of his search for a man and a party capable of saving the nation (p. 207). This suggests that De Roberto himself, despite his pessimism regarding democracy, probably remained sceptical about the claims of Fascism, although there would seem not to be any more concrete evidence to support this idea. The crisis suffered by Ranaldi (the degree to which it can be identified with that of the author will be discussed below) is caused by his observation of the failure of what Depretis called the 'grande nuovo partito nazionale' (Croce, Storia d'Italia, p. 20) founded on trasformismo: the hopes placed in this informal union of the moderate elements of both Left and Right as the best means of defending the monarchy, the constitution and the unity of Italy against the subversive forces of clerical reaction and social revolution (Seton-Watson, p. 51), were dashed by the reality of a vast national spoils system, functioning

through a combination of threats and favours in a network of clientele.

There is little or no evidence of an inclination on the part of De Roberto, himself, to active involvement in politics (35). What does exist, in fact, is a document, in the form of a letter to the socialist deputato, Giuseppe De Felice Giuffrida (1859-1920), which provides confirmation of the author's disimpegno, his retreat from involvement, and of his conception of the political arena - which also emerges from his novels - as a battlefield where reason is totally subverted.

In the elections of September 1910 for the Catania city council, De Felice had included De Roberto's name in the heterogeneous list of the generically left-wing 'Fascio Democratico delle Organizzazioni Politiche e Professionali Autonome', presumably - given the description of De Roberto in the list as a 'letterato apolitico e amantissimo delle cose di Catania', coming, in the alphabetical order, immediately after that of 'De Felice Giuffrida Giuseppe, socialista' - in the hope of attracting votes by exploiting the writer's fame and his reputation for honesty, rather than in the name of any affinity between their views. De Roberto attempted to withdraw his candidature by writing to the press and to De Felice himself, and even having notices fly-posted around the city explaining to the electorate that he could not accept it because he was 'alieno e lontano per indole e proponimento dalle lotte della vita pubblica'. It is, however, from the letter to De Felice (36), written from the family retreat in the small town of Zafferana Etnea,

that one gets the clearest picture of the motives for De Roberto's refusal of the candidature.

The author begins by distancing himself both from De Felice and from the latter's rivals in the list of the 'Blocco Cittadino', whose leader, Pietro Aprile di Cimìa, was an old friend of De Roberto: he states his fear that, given the conditions of 'lo spirito pubblico', the good of the city 'non possa raggiungersi da nessuna delle parti che se ne contendono il governo'. De Roberto declares his faith in an ideal form of democracy, in which the clash of principles and of opposing programmes is a sign of a healthy public life, provided that the contest is conducted within 'i limiti che la ragione e la prudenza consigliano e impongono'. His critical attitude towards trasformismo is confirmed in his allotment of equal importance to the roles of the majority and the minority in parliament: in his ideal democracy, the duties of the legislature are divided into two parts; 'opera di risoluzione e di esecuzione da parte di chi sarà chiamato al governo, di critica e di verifica da parte di chi resterà all'opposizione'. The author presents the picture of an environment in which these conditions for a rational democracy do not exist and have, perhaps, never existed (37): the struggle for political power, instead of the orderly battle he envisages, is 'una barbara mischia' in which the forces involved, 'intente a dilaniarsi e distruggersi', cannot, therefore, dedicate themselves to the task of governing. He speaks of his doubt that 'vincitori e vinti continueranno, dopo la giornata campale, a dilaniarsi senza quartiere', without respect for the merits or rights of the

others and, with disregard for Christian morality, refusing to recognize their own errors, while casting stones at their opponents. Madrignani points to the connotations of violence in De Roberto's choice of expression, attributing this to a profound fear of the destruction of the individual by an absolute power: the author himself describes this letter as the expression of a 'sentimento angoscioso' and, as has already been demonstrated in the analysis of the two novels depicting the world of politics, this aversion is linked to the belief that, in practice, the ideal of power founded on reason is impossible to achieve. The connexion between the letter and L'Imperio can, perhaps, be demonstrated by a certain similarity of tone in the lexis used in them by the author: in the novel, too, the political struggle is described, in certain moments, in terms of a 'combattimento' (p. 193) in which, 'ai caduti [gli avversari] non davano quartiere' (p. 194), or, more generically - and reminiscent of Verga - using the same terms of 'vincitori' and 'vinti' (p. 71) found in the letter.

The content of this letter tends to support the theory, referred to above, that Ranaldi's crisis, as described in the final chapter of L'Imperio, reflects a crisis suffered by De Roberto himself (38). Ranaldi can, in many ways, be seen as a semi-autobiographical figure (39): apart from their shared name, the author and his character are more or less contemporaries - De Roberto was born on 16 January 1861 while Ranaldi's date of birth is brought forward to the preceding 12 November to coincide symbolically with Vittorio Emanuele's arrival in Naples (L'Imperio, p. 69); the parents

of Ranaldi, like those of his creator, were both of aristocratic origin (p. 66), and the experience of his uncle, Lodovico, a captain first in the Neapolitan army, promoted under Garibaldi's rule, demoted by the Piedmontese government and finally re-promoted but removed from active service, is based on that of the author's father, Ferdinando; both Ranaldi and De Roberto were monarchists in their youth, and the writer was one of the student representatives at a reception given during a royal visit to Catania in 1881 (40). When Ranaldi retreats to his parents' home in Salerno after twenty years in Rome as a journalist, the disillusionment he expresses may be compared, therefore, to that which the author undoubtedly felt. Ranaldi's nihilistic outburst, rather than a precise expression of the author's views, could be seen as the cathartic isolation and enlargement of one tendency of this disillusionment (41). A plausible interpretation of the figure of Ranaldi in L'Imperio is to see him as an attempt by De Roberto to free himself of a similar cynicism and melancholy, to which the letter to De Felice testifies.

The description of the world of political journalism in L'Imperio permits the development of the theme, previously seen in a different form in I Vicerè, of the corruption of written culture. The aim of don Eugenio's falsification of the truth had been financial profit, but in his distortion of the history of the aristocracy it is possible to see a subversion, albeit unconscious, of the culture of power - an idea later developed in Sciascia's Il Consiglio d'Egitto. In the political environment of L'Imperio, the written word

becomes an instrument of propaganda, even for the well-intentioned Ranaldi, whose aim is 'la rigenerazione politica e morale del suo Paese, quasi una seconda creazione della Patria' (p. 101). Except in the figure of Ranaldi, the press is discredited throughout L'Imperio: if Ranaldi's father is presented as an ultra-conservative, he is also shown to be rigorously honest and scrupulous, so a part of his definition of journalism as 'l'ultima delle professioni, l'occupazione dei disoccupati, la capacità degli inetti' sticks (p. 77); the day after the fiasco of Consalvo's maiden speech, the papers are full of obsequious euphemisms, much to the surprise of the visiting electors who had witnessed the hostility of the journalists in parliament (pp. 47-8); Beatrice Vanieri's profile of Consalvo (pp. 103-6), apart from the licence it permits itself with historical and geographical facts, is so exaggerated in its praise as to be defined jokingly 'una dichiarazione d'amore' (p. 115); Consalvo exploits the death of his uncle, the duca d'Oragua, issuing press communiques regarding the family tradition of democracy and self-sacrifice in the interests of the nation (pp. 132-3); even in the report of the attack on Consalvo, the single knife-wound becomes two shots, one of which, however, misses its target (p. 169). Towards the close of the novel, the falsity of the news reported in the press, its nature as an instrument of power, is made explicit: 'Federico, a Roma, assisteva al dietroscena della crisi, della quale, sulla Cronaca e sugli altri fogli, il pubblico aveva notizie laconiche e false' (p. 194). It is interesting to note De Roberto's use of a similar expression in a letter

written to his mother from Rome, which may provide evidence for a degree of identification between the author and his character: 'Per ora mi sto godendo il dietro-scena della crisi' (letter dated 8 December 1909, now in L'Imperio, p. xxiv).

As in I Vicerè, doubt is cast on the whole idea of rational discourse. In Consalvo, ideas and ideology are reduced to 'parole, parole, parole' (p. 34), while the discourse of the majority of his parliamentary colleagues is denied even the rational foundation of words: 'Contro due o tre la cui parola era veramente facile e chiara e nobile a un tempo, la folla degli oratori abbaivano, miagolavano, muggivano' (p. 100). In particular, Consalvo's conference on socialism, which occupies the greater part of Chapter 7 (pp. 146-69), provides numerous examples, underlined by the critical reflections of Ranaldi, of the appropriation of the language of reason to justify bourgeois, capitalist ideology: the disillusioned journalist observes how reason, used in this way, is far from being a universal value and satisfies the orator and his public only because of 'l'angustia delle loro menti', serving only as self-justification for 'l'egoismo dei loro cuori' (p. 167).

The crisis suffered by Ranaldi is a crisis of reason, which is a natural extension of De Roberto's conception, presented in the two novels examined here, of reason as an instrument of power. The spectacle of the misappropriation of reason and the discourse associated with it, and their use as apologies for power, leads Ranaldi to doubt the motives for his own actions, to accuse himself of having

chosen a career in journalism for purely egoistic reasons, in order to live independently of his parents and with the aim of achieving fame and fortune, and, all the time, deceiving himself and others into thinking that he was engaged in a socially-useful mission (p. 208). His greater doubt, which it would seem permissible to suggest was also a doubt of the author, questions the very foundation of liberal humanism: 'Perché credere che la ragione e la verità erano state dalla sua parte, e non da quella degli altri?' (p. 208). A similar doubt undermines the value of rational human endeavour and, revealingly, one might suggest, the vanity of Ranaldi the writer:

E che valeva tutto ciò che egli aveva detto e scritto, in tanti anni? Che valeva tutto ciò che avevano detto e scritto gli altri al pari di lui, i più valenti, i sommi? Le parole umane se ne andavano col vento, gli stessi scritti si cancellavano e si disperdevano; quelli che parevano immortali duravano un poco di più; ma l'oblio li aspettava del pari, dopo secoli invece che anni; ma anni e secoli e millenni non erano che momenti nell'eternità. (p. 208)

Again, this might be seen as an expression of De Roberto's own sense of failure, if one considers that Brancati reported him as having confided to his friend Francesco Guglielmino, '"Nulla resterà di me!... Nulla! Sono uno scrittore fallito!'" (42).

Stumbling back from the brink of suicide, Ranaldi decides to marry the young Anna Ursino, who has opposed her domestic philosophy to his sterile idealism:

'I cibi più gustosi e nutritivi non si possono preparare senza maneggiare della roba non sempre pulita, senza ammucciare una quantità di detriti che vanno a finire allo spazzaturaio'. (p. 238)

The conclusion could be interpreted as an acceptance of a need to conform to bourgeois morality: 'Non protestare, non obbiettare, accettare quelle offerte, goderne, esultarne: così voleva la vita' (p. 244), but this air of resignation is undermined by Ranaldi's cynicism:

Già: invece di uccidersi... invece di uniformarsi alla disperata concezione del male universale, prender moglie, mettere al mondo altre creature, contribuire alla perpetuazione del male... (p. 243)

Ranaldi adapts to social convention as a question of convenience, while remaining unconvinced of the potential for good of a society founded on the values of power. De Roberto's refusal or inability to revise and publish L'Imperio suggests, perhaps, his dissatisfaction with a conclusion that implies acceptance of the idea that reason may not exist outside the discourse of power.

NOTES

(1) See, for example, the comments of both Brancati and Sciascia, who both attributed greater importance to De Roberto than to Verga, at least on a personal level: Vitaliano Brancati, 'Uno scrittore dimenticato', Quadrivio, 15 and 22 December 1935, pp. 1-2 and p.3; Leonardo Sciascia, 'Non obbedisco a niente e a nessuno', La Fiera Letteraria, 14 July 1974, pp. 12-14.

(2) Benedetto Croce, La letteratura della nuova Italia, Bari, 1940, vol. VI, p. 143. Gramsci, whose own critical work was inextricably linked to his political beliefs, commented on this political aspect of Croce's 'aesthetics', Letteratura e vita nazionale (1950), Rome, 1991, pp. 20-1.

(3) 'Perché Croce aveva torto', La Repubblica, 14-15 August 1977, p. 10.

(4) See, for example, the introduction to Benedetto Croce, Storia dell'Europa nel secolo decimonono, Bari, 1932, and Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915, Bari, 1928. For a discussion of the historiography of the Risorgimento, see A. William Salomone, 'The Risorgimento between Ideology and History: The Political Myth of rivoluzione mancata', American Historical Review, 68 (1962), 38-56. Salomone comments thus on Croce's idealism: 'In the Crocean world of the Risorgimento, liberty stirs and breathes almost as a transcendent spirit, a secular faith, an idea larger than the men who are its instruments... For Croce, Cavour lives and works in a Rankean sphere, as if on a providential mission beyond error and beyond judgment' (pp. 48-9).

(5) Paolo Mario Sipala, 'Sull'ideologia del Verga', in Missione e compromissione. Ideologie politiche e letteratura tra Otto e Novecento, Milan, 1974, pp. 76, 78.

(6) Libertà, first published in Domenica Letteraria, 12 March 1882, then in Novelle rusticane, Turin, 1883.

(7) Leonardo Sciascia, 'Verga e la libertà' (1963), in La corda pazza. Scrittori e cose della Sicilia, Turin, 1970, pp. 79-94 (p. 83).

(8) For details of the scandal of the Banca Romana, which led to the fall of Giolitti's government, see Giorgio Candeloro, Storia dell'Italia moderna, 11 vols, Milan, 1956-86, VI (1986), 421-9. Thorough accounts of the 'Fasci siciliani', which concluded with the arrest of the leaders of the movement and the proclamation of martial law in Sicily, can be found in S. F. Romano, Storia dei Fasci siciliani, Bari, 1959, and Francesco Renda, I Fasci siciliani, 1892-94, Turin, 1977.

(9) G. Titta Rosa, in the article, 'Le carte di Federico De Roberto', La Fiera Letteraria (25 December 1927), announced the impending publication by the review of a chapter of L'Imperio, and, indeed, part of the final chapter was published in the same review, renamed L'Italia letteraria,

on 7 April 1929, anticipating by a few weeks the publication of the novel by Mondadori. Of the subsequent editions, the only one worthy of note is the 'Oscar Mondadori' edition of 1981, in which the text was revised by Carlo A. Madrignani on the basis of a typescript hand-corrected by the author: a detailed account of the history of the text can be found in Madrignani's introduction (pp. xxxv-liv). All references to L'Imperio are to this edition.

(10) Mario Pomilio, 'L'antirisorgimento di De Roberto', Le ragioni narrative, 1, no. 6 (1960), 154-74 (pp. 162-3).

(11) See, for example, Francesco Erbanì, 'Il trasformismo politico nella Sicilia di De Roberto', Nord e Sud, 26, no. 7 (1979), 110-18; Pietro Guarino, 'Ricerche derobertiane', Rassegna della letteratura italiana, 67 (1963), 310-16; Marcello Turchi, 'Natura problematica e prospettive storiche dei Vicerè di De Roberto', Rassegna della letteratura italiana, 64 (1960), 69-75.

(12) It will be seen below that, in fact, this was more a retreat from involvement.

(13) Letter from Federico De Roberto to Ferdinando Di Giorgi, dated Milan, 16 July 1891; published in Aurelio Navarra, Federico De Roberto: la vita e l'opera, Catania, 1974, p. 273. Other letters to Di Giorgi document the progress of the novel in the second half of the same year, the final stages of preparation before publication (10 September 1893), and the author's subsequent dissatisfaction with the work (30 July 1895).

(14) I Vicerè, Milan, 1980, p. 3: all subsequent references are to this edition.

(15) p. 158. De Roberto's Uzedas are fictional, but it is likely that he took the name from the Porta Uzeda in Catania, named after don Ivan Francisco Pacheco, Duque de Uzeda, viceroy of Charles II of Hapsburg from 1687 to 1696. His successor (1696-1701) was don Pedro Manuel Colon, Duque de Veraguas, whose title may have suggested to De Roberto that of the duca d'Oragua: this hypothesis is supported by the fact that Veraguas is known to have taken advantage of his position to line his own pockets ('I Vicerè ritrovati', supplement to Cronache Parlamentari Siciliane, new series, 6, no. 11 (December 1989), 18-19).

(16) As Tom O'Neill, for one, has pointed out, De Roberto was clearly influenced by Darwin and by Taine's theory of la race, le moment et le milieu, which reached him via Zola, whom he described as 'maestro dei maestri' (Preface to Documenti umani, Milan, 1889, pp. v-vi), Verga and Capuana. See Tom O'Neill, 'Lampedusa and De Roberto', Italica, 47 (1970), 170-82 (p. 171).

(17) p. 347. This use of 'positive' terms - 'la fiducia, la stima e la gratitudine' - to signify 'negative' concepts is an example of the way in which, in De Roberto's works, the

discourse of liberal humanism is undermined by the impositions of power. This idea will be analysed in detail below.

(18) 'Zolianamente vi apportò l'intenzione di dimostrare... che una gente, usa per secoli a dominare, non abbandona questa sua pratica per larghi e profondi che siano i rivolgimenti sociali e politici accaduti, attraverso i quali gl'individui di quella famiglia, armati della capacità ricevuta ereditariamente, riescono a sormontare e continuano, in modi nuovi, a dominare.... Questa idea... non aveva in ogni caso bisogno di un così grosso libro per essere esemplificata, dato che ciò fosse necessario e dato che contenesse una verità dimostrabile, della quale cosa è da dubitare' (Croce, La letteratura della nuova Italia, VI, 143; my italics).

(19) The phrase first appeared in relation to De Roberto in Luigi Russo, 'Ritratti critici di contemporanei. Federico De Roberto', Belfagor, 5 (1950), 668-75 (p. 673). According to Russo, this pessimism caused the author to accentuate those aspects which demonstrate the vice, madness and degeneration of the characters: De Roberto, himself, had justified this bias, explaining that for 'lo scrittore naturalista' the most interesting and most abundant material was to be found 'negli ambienti corrotti, nei tipi degenerati, nei casi patologici' (Preface to Documenti umani, p. xiii). Vittorio Spinazzola, more generously than Croce or Russo, defined De Roberto, notwithstanding his 'esasperato pessimismo', as 'il poeta di un dolore che non sa rassegnarsi né consolarsi', thus echoing Sipala's comments on Verga's ideology referred to above (Vittorio Spinazzola, Verismo e positivismo, Milan, 1977, pp. 136-7).

(20) For historians' views on the Risorgimento as a rivoluzione mancata, see Piero Gobetti, La rivoluzione liberale. Saggio sulla lotta politica in Italia (1924), Turin, 1948, pp. 19-51; and, on the South in particular, Guido Dorso La rivoluzione meridionale, Turin, 1925: both cited by Salomone in the article referred to in note (4) above (pp. 44-5). Gramsci's definition of rivoluzione passiva was the renewal of the State through reforms or national wars, but without a radical political revolution (Antonio Gramsci, Il Risorgimento (1949), new edition, Rome, 1991, p. 118).

(21) p. 91. Similarly, donna Teresa is able to criticize the avarice of her sister-in-law, donna Ferdinanda; 'giacché la propria era naturalmente legittima ed ammirabile' (p. 95).

(22) An analysis of the gender implications of power in I Vicerè would also need to take into account the author's insistence on the masculinity of the women of the later generations of the Uzeda family:

'Chiara e Lucrezia, quantunque fresche e giovani entrambe, erano disavvenenti, quasi non parevano donne; la zia Ferdinanda, sotto panni mascholini, sarebbe parsa qualcosa di mezzo tra l'usuraio e il sagrestano; ed altrettante figure

maschilmente dure spiccavano fra i ritratti femminili di più fresca data'. (p. 87)

The power enjoyed by these characters is clearly at the expense of their femininity.

(23) There is, perhaps, an echo of don Eugenio's 'riforme grammaticali' (p. 201) in the universal language invented by Brancati's Professor Neri, while Buscaino's search for sponsors for the project of the panoramic tower resembles the endless attempts by don Eugenio - 'sempre in busca di quattrini' (p. 340) - to sell his cultural initiatives.

(24) p. 557. A passing reference to the similarity between don Eugenio and Sciascia's character was first made by Ermanno Scuderi in 'Federico De Roberto e la letteratura d'oggi', Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 123 (1964-5), 63-87 (pp. 76-7). Of course, the historical figure of Giuseppe Vella was active a century before the publication of I Vicerè, so one cannot exclude the possibility that De Roberto had him in mind when he created don Eugenio.

(25) See the conclusion for a more thorough discussion of this and other similarities between the three writers, and of the differences between them.

(26) pp. 202-3. This is also to be the subject of the studies of Leopoldi in Gli anni perduti.

(27) Lettere a donna Marianna degli Asmundo, edited by Sarah Zappulla Muscarà, Catania, 1978; relevant passages from these and other letters now in L'Imperio, pp. xxi-xxiv.

(28) Francesco Bonini 'L'Imperio di Federico De Roberto, persone e date', Il ponte, 39, no. 1 (January 1983), 99-103.

(29) 'Bisognerebbe che io avessi venti anni di vita romana, di ambienti romani, nella memoria; e non ne ho che per tre mesi!' (letter to his mother, dated Rome, 24 February 1909; in L'Imperio, p. xxiii). It should be noted, however, that De Roberto subsequently wrote a series of short stories set at the front, without having any direct experience of the war (now in La 'Cocotte', e altre novelle, edited by Sarah Zappulla Muscarà, Rome, 1979): even if the novel required greater attention to the setting than the short stories, this fact supports the theory that De Roberto's scruples might be a screen, conscious or otherwise, for other difficulties.

(30) Note Pomilio's contention that in I Vicerè historical events are relegated to the level of 'cronaca', while the latter, the story of the Uzedas, assumes the significance of history ('L'antirisorgimento di De Roberto', p. 170).

(31) I Vicerè, p. 648. In the elections of 1882, suffrage had, in fact, passed from approximately 600,000 to two million, from two percent to seven percent of the population

(Christopher Seton-Watson, Italy from Liberalism to Fascism, London, 1967, pp. 50-1).

(32) Richard Bosworth, Italy and the Approach of the First World War, London, 1983, p. 24. In an earlier work, Bosworth had categorically identified De Roberto's character of Consalvo Uzeda with the Sicilian politician, Antonino Paternò-Castello, marchese di San Giuliano (1852-1914), foreign minister from 1910 until his death (Italy, the least of the Great Powers: Italian foreign policy before the First World War, London, 1979, pp. 72-5. Bonini's article tries to provide keys for the identification of other characters in L'Imperio (see note (28) above).

(33) This period is described in detail in Candeloro, VI, 297-319, and in Seton-Watson, Part I, Chapter 2 'Italy under Depretis' (in particular, the sub-section on 'The Political System and its Critics', pp. 91-7).

(34) Compare, in Sciascia's A ciascuno il suo (1966), Rosello's description of onorevole Abello as "'un uomo straordinario, che ha idee talmente grandi che queste miserie di destra e di sinistra... per lui non hanno senso"' (A ciascuno il suo, tenth edition 'Nuovi Coralli', Turin, 1979, p. 84). See the conclusion for a discussion of Sciascia's contention that I Vicerè (and, by association, L'Imperio) 'illumina l'intelletto... a tal punto che anche dei mali presenti possiamo... trovare rappresentazione e ragione' ('Perché Croce aveva torto').

(35) De Roberto was, for a period of a few months in 1880, editor of a monarchist newspaper, Il Plebiscito, published in Catania, and from 1881 to 1883, of the weekly Don Chisciote, with the same political tendency. In the local elections of 1887, De Roberto's name appeared in the list of the confusingly-named, conservative 'Circolo degli Operai', but he obtained only sixty-two votes of preference and was fifty-fourth of the non-elected candidates. The details of this episode and of De Roberto's reluctant election as a city councillor in 1910 are described in Sebastiano Catalano, 'Consigliere per forza. L'attività politica di Federico De Roberto', La Sicilia (25 July 1985), p. 3.

(36) Now in Carlo A. Madrignani, 'Pensiero politico e "vissuto politico" in F. De Roberto', in Letteratura e società: omaggio a G. Petronio, Palermo, 1980, pp. 407-17 (pp. 411-12).

(37) Compare this to Sciascia's idea of 'il sonno della ragione' in Sicily: see the analysis of Candido (1977) below.

(38) See, in this respect, the comments of Pietro Guarino, who describes the author's crisis as both 'umana e culturale', pointing to the part which the rise of 'la cultura antiveristica e dannunziana' probably played in provoking this crisis: Pietro Guarino, 'Appunti su Federico De Roberto', Belfagor, 18 (1963), 465-70 (pp. 466-7).

(39) De Roberto's biographical details can be found in Navarra, Federico De Roberto: la vita e l'opera.

(40) The young Ranaldi's intransigence (pp. 75-7) and presumption ("Se almeno egli vedesse giusto, potrebbe avere il diritto d'essere ascoltato", p. 88) are, however, examples of attitudes criticized by De Roberto in the letter to De Felice.

(41) On the subject of literary creation as a cathartic process, it is interesting to note the ideas of De Roberto's near contemporary, André Gide (1869-1951), who described his creative process thus:

Que de bourgeois nous portons en nous... qui n'écloront jamais que dans nos livres!... Mais si, par volonté, on les supprime tous, sauf un, comme il croit aussitôt, comme il grandit!... Pour créer un héros, ma recette est bien simple: Prendre un de ces bourgeois, le mettre en pot - tout seul - on arrive bientôt à un individu admirable... On s'en défait du même coup. C'est peut-être là ce qu'appelait Aristote la purgation des passions. (Letter to Scheffer (1902), in Pierre Lafille, André Gide, romancier, Paris, 1954, p. 10)

In another letter of the same period, Gide wrote, 'sans mon Immoraliste, je risquais de le devenir' (letter to Francis Jammes (6 August 1902), in Lafille, p. 10).

(42) Vitaliano Brancati, 'Un letterato d'altri tempi', Il Tempo (18 December 1947); now in Il borghese e l'immensità, Milan, 1973, pp. 223-5 (p. 225).

Chapter 3: Vitaliano Brancati.

De Roberto's generation had witnessed the failure of the myths of the Risorgimento: that which followed it was to find new myths. If the former's faith in democracy had been shaken by the spectacle of trasformismo in liberal Italy, the new generation was to respond to the mood of scepticism by sweeping aside the structures of democratic government and replacing them with a dictatorship. The low-keyed atmosphere of post-Risorgimento 'Italiotta' was to be superseded by the triumphant proclamation of a glorious new Roman Empire, and the predominant culture of the period reflected this new mood.

Vitaliano Brancati, the second of the three writers whose works are examined here, began his literary career under the dual influences of Fascism and dannunzianesimo. His earliest works reveal these influences in their idealization of the 'man of action' and their decrial of the contemplative type, and in their highly rhetorical style (1). It was only in his later works that Brancati rejected the discourse of attivismo and of power, in favour of that of liberal humanist reason as defined above. In order to understand the nature of his interpretation of this ideology and the way in which he arrived at this, it is worth looking briefly at some of Brancati's early works as examples of the cultural ballast he later attempted to discard.

There is, perhaps, no better way of indicating the nature of the tone and content of the one-act play Everest than by quoting from the author's note:

Il Fascismo è rappresentato, in Everest, nel suo imperativo categorico, in quello che non può non essere oggi come ieri, domani come oggi: un'accolta di uomini puri, vigorosi, dignitosi, intorno a uno che,

nell'attirarli e sollevarli verso l'alto, mentre lascia libera la loro personalità, si serve di una misteriosa e invincibile forza che trascende lui e gli altri. (Everest, p. 82)

The reference to Kant's categorical imperative clearly indicates how, at this stage, Brancati attributed to the values of Fascism the universality traditionally reserved for 'pure reason', the role and discourse of which have here been usurped by power. Another play, Piave, ends with Sergeant Mussolini's exhortation to heroism in the face of adversity: "'L'Italia non è stata mai così bene in piedi, come oggi. Se ricadrà, noi la solleveremo"' (Piave, pp. 164-5). Reading this type of rhetorical outburst today, one might be tempted to attribute to the author a satirical intention, but one should also bear in mind the atmosphere at the time Brancati was writing. Note, for example this contemporary presentation of the volume containing Mussolini's speeches of the year 1930:

I discorsi di Mussolini... non sono solo dei discorsi. Non lo sono anzi affatto se si pensa a quel che i discorsi, in Parlamento e fuori, hanno sempre significato: astrazioni dissertazioni, costruzioni a vuoto senza alimento e fuoco di vita.

I discorsi di Mussolini, invece, per l'altissima posizione dell'uomo, per la sua virtù di comando, per il suo stesso temperamento, sono insieme parola e azione: esposizione e indicazione di volontà; monito e comando; rassegna di quel che si è fatto ieri, anticipazione di quello che si farà domani. (2)

Mussolini's speech at the end of Brancati's play is a reproach to the defeatism of the protagonist, Giovanni Dini, whose principal error, as another character has already pointed out, lies in his tendency to contemplation (p. 121). The prevalence of such characters in these early works -

besides Giovanni, there is Francesco in Everest ("Io ho paura per l'eternità... Io ho avuto sempre paura! Paura di nascere, di vivere... paura di morire oggi" (p. 71)), and, in L'amico del vincitore, Pietro Dellini - has led at least one critic to propose that they be re-evaluated. Luigia Abrugiati points to the emphasis the young Brancati placed on the dissidents' crises of conscience and wilful opposition, thus revealing, she suggests, an instinctive predilection for the weak and defeated, and an innate taste for polemic and anticonformismo, while, she argues, the eventual 'enlightenment' of the dissidents and their return to 'normality', with the realization that their opposition is not only useless but also damaging to the collectivity, invariably comes in a mechanical finale, extrinsic to the rest of the story (3). A similar thesis was put forward by Sciascia in his reading of L'amico del vincitore, which he described as a novel which speaks of 'la volontà ad essere fascista e dell'impossibilità ad esserlo da parte di uno scrittore e di forte vocazione moralistica e satirica' (4).

Sciascia concluded his discussion of L'amico del vincitore with the suggestion that the death of Pietro Dellini at the end of the novel, after his failure to become truly 'amico del vincitore', symbolized 'il suicidio del Brancati che credeva di essere fascista, che voleva esserlo' (p. 17). There can be no doubt about Brancati's intentions in writing this novel, inspired as it was by his radical misreading of Giuseppe Antonio Borgese's novels, Rubè (1921) and I vivi e i morti (1923), in which, he later admitted, it had seemed to him that the author 'celebrasse la vittoria dell'uomo

attivo sul pensatore', and in which he found what he interpreted as 'i simboli poetici del fascismo' (5). Brancati described how this misunderstanding had led him to write earnestly to Borgese in the United States, where he was effectively exiled by Fascist hostility, exhorting him to declare publicly the faith in Fascism and its ideals which Brancati had found in his novels. Borgese replied in a letter dated 8 July 1933, published by Brancati in the essay referred to above (pp. 56-60), indicating his liberal ideals of tolerance, heterodoxy and reason, and which reached Brancati when he was already beginning to doubt the ideology of attivismo. This would tend to suggest that Brancati had, indeed, unconsciously absorbed the liberalism of Borgese and would support the thesis of Abrugiati and Sciascia, who saw in Brancati's early work a prelude to the anti-Fascist crisis he was to experience.

An important testimony to the crisis suffered by Brancati in these years can be found in the essay 'Istinto e intuizione', referred to above, in the first part of which Brancati analyses his own relationship with fascism (6). He describes how, as a young man, he had been ashamed of what he describes as 'ogni qualità alta e nobile', how he had envied 'quelli fra i coetanei ch'erano più robusti e più idioti', and how he had attributed the blame for his own physical weakness to four qualities or habits ('studio, meditazione, esame di coscienza, disamore per il pratico e l'utile') which he groups together under the name of 'Pensiero' (pp. 51-2). To these he had opposed the two terms of the essay's title as solutions to the nervous exhaustion

to which he had fallen prey. Brancati explains how his values, and those of the society around him, had been inverted:

Il mondo era capovolto, col cielo in basso e l'inferno in alto: la salute mi avvicinava all'alto, e la malattia al basso, e poiché sapevo che in alto c'era Dio e in basso il diavolo, credevo in buona fede di vedere Dio sorridere alle mie smargiassate, e il diavolo trasparire fra la malinconia, la pensosità e il rimorso, i tre veli della mia adolescenza che ogni tanto cercavano di riavvolgermi. (p. 53)

He was further encouraged in this corruption of values by the inviting alternative offered by fascism: 'quel credere [che] si risolveva in sostanza nel categorico invito a non pensare' (p. 54; author's italics). However, by the time Borgese's letter reached him from the United States, Brancati was ready to abandon this faith and to return to the salutary torments of 'Pensiero':

La mia ubbriachezza di stupidità era per dissiparsi, lasciandomi fra sofferenze e disordini morali talmente forti da non far capire che cosa andasse alla malora, se le mie larve o la mia gioventù o la mia vita stessa. (p. 56)

Brancati was later to define everything he wrote and published after 1936 as 'ostile al gusto ufficiale' (7), but it is possible to see in many of his earlier writings, beginning with the short stories published from the beginning of 1933 onwards, a move away from the heroic themes of his fascist writing and towards the depiction of 'la malinconia, la pensosità e il rimorso'.

Early in 1933, Brancati published the first of what can be defined his novelle di pensione in which he described the experiences of provincial boarders in the capital. Arrivo in

città (8) tells the story of Luigi Arlini, just such a figure, who, despite the romantic notions of 'quello che doveva provare, mettendo il piede nella grande città' (p. 161) - that is, alienation, solitude, spleen - and despite his attempts to imagine 'cose lugubri' (p. 163), discovers, in the domestic objects and noises which surround him in his rented room in Rome, both comfort and company. Luigi Arlini is an anti-hero of a type which was to feature strongly in Brancati's subsequent works. In contrast with his invocation of 'quel puro coraggio, che spinge all'azione senza rimorsi', the description of his movements seems to betray a more homely and timid character, who is far from heroic: 'Si alzò in pantofole, aprì la porta e attraversò il corridoio' (p. 163). The vulgar and aggressive phrases which he mumbles to himself, 'come se volesse sgranchire la sua forza in un'espressione volgare', contrast with the modest tone he assumes on the phone when asking for 'il commendatore Arnò', on whose benevolence, one imagines, depends his hope of a job in the capital (pp. 163-4). The reader is left no doubts about the true nature of Luigi's attivismo, and indeed, the first word of the story after his name introduces what appears to be the principal trait of the character: 'Luigi Arlini, sonnacchiando nel vagone di seconda classe...' (p. 161; my italics). His first impressions on his arrival are presented from a similar perspective:

Non appena si sdraiò sul letto della camera pentagonale e adagiò le spalle sui cuscini, si sentì amato dalle cose e forte. Quel dormire sulla traccia ancora calda di un uomo gli diede l'impressione che, a tre anni, gli aveva dato il padre, sollevandolo dal marciapiede, in cui si era smarrito, e stringendolo al petto. (p. 162; my italics)

(Also worth noting here is the contradiction between Luigi's sentirsi forte and the image of the lost child.) Two pages later, Luigi retreats to his bed again and sinks into 'un sonno beato' (p. 164).

Another of Luigi's romantic fantasies involves the courtship and seduction of the bohemian Baroness who shares with her husband the room adjoining his own: but, we are told, he is destined to be disillusioned here, too. In spite of the 'successful' conclusion, Luigi is denied his romantic conquest, 'e senti, con disgusto, la sua vita com'era realmente: condannata alla fortuna e alla brutalità' (p. 165). It could be argued that the disgust described here by Brancati is, perhaps unbeknown even to the author himself, a response to the initiative taken by the woman, who, although the episode is seen through the man's consciousness which tends to reduce her to a passive figure, is in fact the initiator of the sexual adventure: Luigi's resentment is supposedly of the element of fortune and brutality which denies him the preliminaries he had imagined, but this is perhaps an unconscious mask for the wound to his masculine pride caused by his being reduced to an instrument of female sexuality.

Another way in which Brancati opposed an alternative to the attivismo promoted by the fascist regime was by depicting in his writings the static and largely futile life offered by the provinces. One such example is the short story, Paese di montagna (9). As in the story of Luigi Arlini, in this tale of four young women forced by economic

circumstances to withdraw to Nn, 'cittadina di mezza montagna', il sonno is a dominant theme and indicates a way to avoid thinking: 'Le ragazze si adattarono alla vita del paese e presto, senza dolore e rimpianti, con la strana letizia di un dormiveglia, videro la loro vita fuggire' (p. 167; my italics). In the case of Enrica Leonardi in particular, the only one of the four to have difficulty in adapting, sleep becomes part of a deliberate effort to suppress her consciousness: on waking up earlier than desired, she uses paradoxically her 'strength' and 'determination' to re-read the letters of the fiancé imposed on her and whom she had succeeded in rejecting;

Subito la riprendeva un sonno leggero e trepido come un desiderio di fuggire; e a poco a poco si formò sulle sue palpebre una paura, piccola come una mano, che, se prima delle dieci il sonno accennava a terminare, s'abbassava piano piano a premere - e il sonno continuava. (p. 167)

Enrica marries and escapes from the immobility of Nn, but the three who remain behind are not shaken from their lassitude:

Alle otto di sera, già le loro palpebre si abbassavano; e per un'ora tutt'e tre sonnacchiavano nelle poltrone; l'indomani si svegliavano tardi, continuamente più tardi. Il sonno è dolce e abitua sempre meglio a dormire. (p. 169)

Indeed, Enrica's engagement, marriage and departure, and her letters describing 'un moto d'uomini e di luci che in un paese come Nn ormai sembrava inventato' provoke in the other three neither envy nor resentment, but merely a sense of annoyance at the 'disordine' these events cause in the thought-free routine which they have imposed on their lives:

at this point, in order to re-establish order and to avoid thinking about an alternative form of existence, it is decided that Enrica's descriptions are lies (p. 168).

Sonno and inaction are obviously not positive values, but Brancati's characters give the lie to the official image of Italian society under Fascism, and, at the same time, there is the suggestion that happiness under the regime necessarily involved the surrender of one's rational capacity.

As the original title (Il tempo vola) suggests, the theme of the passing of time, further developed in the novel, Gli anni perduti, written between 1934 and 1936, is also central to this story:

Le giornate sono tutte uguali, dall'alba al tramonto, quasi fossero una sola; e come una sola giornata passa l'inverno. Poi viene la primavera; ma anch'essa sceglie un suo tipo di giornata e continuamente per tre mesi la ripete... Così, un bel giorno, senza che nessuno riesca a capire come sia avvenuto, ecco di nuovo il cielo d'estate, che pare tagli la montagna, ed ecco di nuovo l'autunno. (p. 166)

The emphasis on the monotony of life and on the way in which time flies in this passive form of existence is clearly in contrast to the doctrine of attivismo which makes man the protagonist of time and history. Brancati later described how Fascism had been built on false heroism, and left no room for true heroism, which risked becoming confused with that of the regime: 'Non rimaneva dunque che puntare su un arduo, penoso, lucido, costante (e in taluni casi eroico) antieroisimo' (10). From this point of view, it is also worth noting, as Rita Verdirame does in her note on this story, the way in which the new type of theme handled by Brancati

was reflected in the language he used, which was no longer elevated and heroic in tone, or complex in syntax (Sogno di un valzer, p. 347).

A further example of the way in which Brancati experimented in shorter prose with the themes to be developed in his novels can be found in Felicità, published at the end of 1933 (now in Sogno di un valzer, pp. 184-6). In this story told in little more than two pages, Brancati introduces the theme of a lost 'happiness', which reappears in Gli anni perduti in the character of Leonardo Barini. The 'felicità' of Federico (Leonardo Barini calls it 'la gioia') is an extreme optimism which implies, too, a surrender of his critical faculty, of his reason. In the days immediately before his marriage to Rosalba he has become incapable of discriminating between the stimuli he receives and candidly accepts them all as the best possible, so that even his vague memories of past suffering assume a friendly air before vanishing, or being banished, from his mind:

Il mistero per cui la sua vita era stata triste e ora s'avviava verso la felicità gli suscitava un'emozione religiosa, un desiderio di lasciarlo mistero, di non domandare, di non sapere. Così era e così era bene. (p. 184)

A happiness based on stupidity is a false and ephemeral one, and Federico's is doomed to end in an equally stupid sadness, for he is to realize that the 'perfect' happiness of a moment ago can never again be equalled or bettered. In Gli anni perduti, as will be seen below, the idea of uncritical satisfaction and the comfort to be obtained from freeing the mind of doubts is given a more explicitly political slant, but even here Brancati's ridicule of

Federico's 'religious' faith is clearly hostile to the tastes of a regime whose watchwords were 'credere, obbedire, combattere'.

The works which Brancati published in 1934, some of which bore the date of the previous year, mark the author's increasing alienation from the ideals of the fascist regime. Singolare avventura di viaggio is frequently described as the first major indication of the crisis which led Brancati to seek a path, both as a writer and in his life in general, outside the false myths of the regime (11). This short novel clearly was written during a period of crisis and is comparable, in this respect, to Brancati's last work, Paolo il caldo (1954): in both these novels, too, the author can be seen to express an ideological crisis in terms of a struggle between intellect and sensuality.

An attempt is made in Singolare avventura di viaggio to explain the appeal of attivismo for the young men of Brancati's generation, who were twenty-five years old in 1932, the year in which the story is set. Luigi Ridolfi, one of the three friends who join the cousins Enrico and Anna Leoni during their stay in Viterbo, attributes the frenetic activity of their generation to a sense of frustration:

'Possediamo troppe forze e non ci siamo mai, come dire?... riversati. Così, dobbiamo agire continuamente, passare da una cosa fatta a una cosa da fare, muovere delle cose dure, pesanti, solide; altrimenti... cadiamo in gravi disordini.' (12)

Inspired by Ridolfi's words, Enrico, himself, refers to the fact of having been born too late to participate in the First World War and in the Fascist seizure of power as a

sort of crime against Time (p. 41). Their actions, however, are implicitly a means of protecting themselves against the discomfort caused by the effort of contemplation. Ridolfi disparagingly describes this tendency to contemplation as the silence of the nineteenth century, which surrounded them in their childhood and which ended with the outbreak of the war, and warns against its dangers:

'Noi non dobbiamo mai fermarci, mio caro; dobbiamo sempre fare qualcosa di pesante. Altrimenti, ci piomba addosso questo silenzio sterminato, questa lentezza, e ci prende la vertigine'. (p. 50)

A direct reference is made to the way in which Mussolini and Fascism had relieved Enrico and his companions of the burden of thought inherent in a democratic system. The dictator is described by Enrico as 'un uomo di genio' who undertakes the 'questioni... inutili' which had previously troubled the young, such as which political party to join, or which newspaper to contribute to, but he unwittingly points to the irrational nature of society under Fascism:

E poi la penosa fatica di dover dare torto o ragione ai diecimila estranei che alla Camera, al Senato, nei Comuni, sui giornali, andavano polemizzando. Ora tutto s'è semplificato'. (p. 10; my italics)

Enrico is sincere in his thinking, but the picture subsequently given of his lack of conscience and his self-justifying ratiocination throws an ironic light on these ideas. When Enrico flees from the 'adventure' with his cousin in Viterbo, and sets out for Rome on foot, his militaristic march - an allusion to the Fascist 'March on Rome' in October 1921 - is also described as 'una fatica',

but one which frees his mind from the more disturbing effort of thinking: '"Camminare! Agire! Potere impegnarsi, finalmente, in una fatica che svuoti, che liberi!' (p. 83; my italics). Ridolfi, with his 'espressione lievemente esaltata', shows how Fascism had flattered nationalistic sentiments and given a sense of purpose to Brancati's generation:

'Siamo il centro del mondo! Questa piccola Nazione, che ha imitato anche i negri per eccesso di fanciullezza, oggi si fa imitare da tutti. La Germania ci ha imitato; la Spagna ci spia; gli Stati Uniti ci vogliono scimmiettare; in Inghilterra, Mosley inizia un movimento che somiglia moltissimo al nostro... Ci sono forse molte cose da fare'. (p. 50)

A theme which Brancati touches on for the first time in Singolare avventura di viaggio, and one which he was later to develop in a comic vein, is that of the mechanical nature of society under a totalitarian regime. Interestingly, it is Enrico who first refers to it, and in an attack on bourgeois society which reveals his adherence to the doctrines of Fascism:

Era la musica, la 'divina superficialità', come soleva dire Enrico. Tutto era diventato facile e accomodante, nel regno, senza logica e senza morale, dei suoni. Nulla era necessario, nulla si doveva fare, tranne che seguire il ritmo.

'Com'è bello!' disse egli. 'Che sciocchezza da paradiso!' (p. 65)

Ironically, Enrico's criticism of the mechanical obedience to the rhythm of the music can be applied equally well to his own submission to the will of the 'uomo di genio', and indeed, the 'senso di ordine e di pace' he finds in his refuge in the 'ritmo volgare e salvatore' of his attivismo ('"Agire! Agire! Un-due! Un-due! Un-due!"' (p. 83)) is

little different from that to be obtained from the music and, if anything, demonstrates an even more extreme surrender of reason. Enrico senses that 'la sua felicità è legata a quel passo di marcia': he concludes that 'un uomo come lui, pieno di forze attive, non deve mai fermarsi nella vita, perché la sua morale è come una luce generata dal movimento', and that the alien morality of contemplation is dangerous to his kind (p. 84). Enrico's is a total rejection of reason in favour of the mechanical simplicity offered by the ideology of the regime.

In Singolare avventura di viaggio, Brancati tends to moralize in a heavy-handed fashion against the errors of Enrico, which were those of a large part of Brancati's generation, including the author himself. The style of the narration reflects the 'heroic' style of Brancati's earliest works, but, if a parody of these and of the contorted intellectualism of the protagonist is intended, the author is not entirely successful in establishing the necessary distance from his target.

Part of the importance attributed recently to this work would seem to originate in the fact that the work was banned by the Fascist authorities shortly after its publication. While it is probably true that the indictment of 'immoralità' was largely a pretext for the suppression of a work which openly criticized the values of the regime, it is possible to see in Singolare avventura di viaggio an element of pornography, not in the sense used by the book's censors, but rather in the author's failure to distance himself unequivocally from the protagonist's treatment of the woman

as an object to be possessed. As will be seen in this examination of his works, Brancati's position regarding this kind of reduction of woman's role to that of an object is frequently ambiguous.

In the long racconto entitled Canto di negri (13), Brancati returned to the pensione for the setting of his story. Whereas many of the author's previous stories had contained an implicit criticism of the attivismo associated with the regime, here, as in Singolare avventura di viaggio, this criticism became explicit. The old history teacher, Giovanni Toni, with his theory that the community in the pensione, and the whole of western civilization of which it is a microcosm, is 'un aggregato umano, formato dall'ottimismo', indicates this optimism as the feature which distinguishes western man from 'i barbari... feroci e malinconici' (pp. 187-8), but, ironically, he is prevented from continuing his philosophizing by the barbaric behaviour of his fellow boarders:

Letizia Bini si alzò e mise una mano sulla bocca del vecchio; ma questi cercò di continuare... Si alzò anche Enzo Magnani e minacciò col tovagliuolo l'oratore impazzito... Enzo Magnani gli legò il tovagliuolo alla bocca; gli altri si misero a gridare, lanciando in aria le bucce delle mele. Il vecchio promise di tacere, alzando le mani. (p. 188)

The melancholy which he attributes to the barbarians reappears in the unconfessed reason for his own unquestioning faith in action, which emerges as his means of warding off death and gives him a sense of well-being and security:

'L'azione! L'azione!' gridò; e si mise a pensare: 'Essi credono che l'azione sia un miracoloso rimedio contro i

mali della giovinezza. Oh, essi non sanno che cosa significhi una vita d'azione, una fede nell'azione, per un vecchio!... Non fermarsi, non fermarsi mai: aver fatto una cosa e incominciare subito una seconda... Ma questo è il paradiso!'

Egli non confessava che, per sua natura, era portato ad aver paura della morte e che la nuova fede lo proteggeva mirabilmente contro una paura simile. (p. 193)

The lives of the boarders are described as 'una grande corsa', a succession of actions and noises emphasized by the way in which Brancati piles them up: 'La mattina, si precipitavano nei corridoi e nelle stanze da toeletta; le docce frusciavano, gli apparecchi telefonici tintinnavano e squillavano; saluti, risa, porte sbattute' (p. 188). Inevitably, this continual movement, this machine-like 'agire, agire continuamente' praised by Toni (p. 192), leaves little or no time for contemplation, or rather, it is a way of keeping moral questions at bay: Magnani, at thirty, for the simple reason that the other half of his life was beginning, freed himself of his remorse for having killed 'un negro' when he was twenty-five (p. 189), and he is equally unscrupulous in the means he uses to obtain funds for the museum of the colonies of which he is now director (pp. 195-7); Rosario Dilella, a young engineering student, feels no remorse for having set his friends on his rival, Carnelli, or for the subsequent death of the latter - the important thing is to have become master of his own destiny and to have won the 'concorso' for the construction of a church (pp. 190, 196).

Toni is led by his observation of these amoral young men who are governed solely by the need for action to the conclusion that a new age is born, in which past centuries

will abandon their burdens of 'mota cerebrale' and 'oscuri rimorsi' and, like rivers in the sea, become transparent: he invokes an irrational age in which there will be no 'pensiero sterile' and no remorse, and in which 'la natura, semplice e divina', will manifest itself in mankind (p. 192). Fifteen years later, Brancati was to describe how, as a young man, he too had held a similar belief:

Conosco minutamente il sapore che aveva, nel '27, per un giovane di vent'anni portato alla meditazione, alla fantasticheria e alla pigrizia, il riscaldarsi per un uomo violento; il credere che stesse per nascere una nuova deliziosa morale il cui bene era agire e il male dubitare. Aveva il sapore di un bicchiere di vino. (Diario romano, p. 144 (January 1949); author's italics)

By the time he wrote Canto di negri, Brancati had clearly rejected the myth of a new morality based on action, as can be seen by the way in which, in this story, he makes the equivocal Toni its prophet.

The 'canto di negri' of the title, the music which Letizia Bini plays to the group one evening, creates a sensation of immobility coming from an ancient civilization (which Toni, naturally, attributes to a barbarian race). Whereas in Singolare avventura di viaggio Enrico remains indifferent to the 'canto di pastore, malinconico e lento' which seems to offer an alternative to the rhythm of his march (Opere, p. 84), in Canto di negri the 'grande corsa' of the characters' lives is arrested. The immobility which descends on them, 'un'immobilità cupa, fissa, attirante', is disturbing for the group in that it forces them into the realm of contemplation, from which their lives of action and movement are an attempt to escape, and

la suggestione era tanto più pericolosa in quanto per la difesa lasciava soltanto libera la reazione morale. Ed era tutta una parte, dolorosa e profonda nell'anima, che si svegliava come un ferito dimenticato nel buio di una cantina. (p. 198)

The trauma provokes various reactions in the characters. 'Il vecchio Toni' is obliged to recognize that the morality he has advocated is at variance with Christian morality, which he describes as 'una morale assoluta e precisa', but from which, he tries to convince himself, the modern age is too distant (p. 199). His insomnia is caused by the realization, in which we can also see his fear of death and contemplation, that a following age will sit in judgement of his irrational activity and of that of his contemporaries:

'La nostra epoca è tutta una corsa, di azione in azione; l'altra, invece, si metterà a meditare su quello che abbiamo fatto noi; in una parola, si fermerà... Ed è terribile fermarsi, d'un tratto: gira la testa!' (p. 201)

Letizia Bini and Enzo Magnani are drawn together in a physical relationship, and this can be seen as a desperate attempt to counter the immobility and contemplation to which the music has invited them: this interpretation is supported by the fact that, even after Magnani has been shot by Dilella, Bini defies the immobility brought by death 'e ancora lo amava fisicamente, come non si può amare un morto' (p. 202). Dilella's action itself is inspired either by jealousy - the explanation chosen by Bini, although she stresses that he had never expressed any such sentiment towards her - or by a sudden explosion within him of bourgeois morality, given that he is found, the revolver still in his hand, shouting '"Eccola, la vergine, eccola!'"

(p. 202): in this case, by murdering Magnani, he uncovers Bini's double 'immorality' of having lied to him about her 'honesty' (pp. 191, 196).

Canto di negri, perhaps better than Singolare avventura di viaggio, dismantles the culture of attivismo. In the short story Brancati would seem to have reached the point of being able to stand back, not only from the content of that culture, but also from its language, which in the novel could still be seen at times to impose itself. As Verdirame points out, except for the clearly parodic rhetoric of Toni, Brancati adopts 'un tono minore, dimesso e di più frugale concretezza sul piano sia lessicale che sintattico' (Sogno di un valzer, p. 350), which reflects the atmosphere described.

The short story, Stagione calma (14) picks up and develops a theme introduced in Singolare avventura di viaggio. If, however, Ridolfi had considered the 'silenzio dell'Ottocento' dangerous and undesirable, here the narrator is unashamedly nostalgic about the 'equilibrio' and 'felicità' of a lost age. The description of the 'villeggiatura' of 1912 in Stagione calma is in direct opposition to the attivismo propounded by the characters of Singolare avventura di viaggio. In contrast with the sense of frustration suffered by the latter, and their longing for a 'noble' cause to which they might dedicate themselves, is the contentedness of the narrator in Stagione calma: 'Non accaddero grandi cose, in quella stagione; ma ciò che accadde fu utile, buono, ed ebbe nella vita le migliori conseguenze' (p. 10). The total happiness described is, as I have shown,

an ambiguous concept but, linked to the theme of nostalgia for a period undisturbed by the coarsening influence of the extremes of attivismo, it becomes a symptom of the author's discontent with his own time and an act of rebellion against the regime. Brancati's disgust with his own time was also to be the subject of other writings such as the short story, Ritratto di donna (1943), and the article, 'I "contenti di vivere nel proprio tempo"' (1946), which will be discussed below.

Stagione calma is important in that it marks the discovery of comic characters which was to be so important to Brancati's writing. Professor Coranini, 'che passava giornate intere rincantucciato nella sua camera, enumerando beato quante sensazioni avesse evitato ai suoi nervi e quanti anni di vita avesse così guadagnato' is one of the earliest characters of a type which was to feature strongly in Brancati's works - characters whose eccentricity places them at the limits of reason, and who are proposed as alternatives, albeit equally irrational, to the heroic figures of the culture of attivismo. It could be argued that, given the fact that power had misappropriated the terms of 'reason' and 'normality' to describe what many intellectuals saw as a phenomenon of mass stupidity, Brancati's recourse to the traditional realm of the irrational was a way of seeking refuge from the discourse of power.

Between February 1935 and March 1936, in the literary weekly, Quadrivio, Brancati published a series of 'Studi per un romanzo', centred around the character of Rodolfo Berrini

(now in Sogno di un valzer, pp. 71-103). Although these draft chapters of Rodolfo, as we may call this work, were never revised and the novel never completed, they reveal further developments in Brancati's thought and in his search for an alternative to the myths proposed by the regime.

In Rodolfo one finds again the theme of felicità, at times alongside that of il sonno: indeed, Rodolfo's uncle, Giacomo Dentelli, finds in his nephew's 'aria di "sonnambulo contento"' (p. 78) the reason for all the ill fortune that befalls the family, although this itself is seen as the uncle's somewhat irrational means of freeing himself from the pain caused by these misfortunes. The principal motive for Rodolfo's happiness and the principal target of Brancati's satire is, however, the surrender of reason represented by the young man's all-consuming faith. This faith is described first as 'ingenua e infantile' (p. 77) and then as 'quel profondo gusto di credere con tutto il proprio intimo libero da legami e da pensieri dominanti' (p. 79). Rodolfo's is a 'religious' faith which, however, avoids all questions of conscience:

Che religione era la sua? Egli non se l'era mai domandato. Non per paura o per pigrizia, ma perché reputava affatto inutile una domanda di questo genere.

Egli credeva, e questo per lui era tutto. Egli cercava con tutte le forze la felicità, e questo per lui era bene. Egli aveva ripugnanza per gli increduli, e questo per lui era santo. (p. 76)

Even when he is obliged to witness the horrors of war, Rodolfo's faith is barely disturbed and, by an unashamed distortion of reasoning, he retains his tranquillity:

Egli si riebbe presto e tornò a sorridere: negli occhi chiusi, nella guancia fangosa di quel cadavere, aveva

percepito la solita allusione misteriosa e amichevole, come quando, in calce a una lettera piena di tristi notizie, si trova un piccolo impercettibile segno d'intesa, una virgola più lunga del solito, una macchiolina, dalla quale uno solo capisce che la lettera non dice la verità. (p. 80)

(This form of 'reasoning' is akin to that later adopted by Sciascia's Calogero Schirò as a means of preserving his tranquillity (15).)

The minor characters in Rodolfo are, like the protagonist, members of the piccola borghesia. Brancati takes delight in depicting them in all their mediocrity, from which their obsessions fail to elevate them: if anything, the banality of these, coupled with the importance which the characters attribute to them, serves only to render them even more pathetic. The protagonist and the minor characters are all out of keeping with the official tastes of the time, and are all of the kind Brancati was later to describe in his article, 'Argomento preferito' (16), in which he explained, not, perhaps, without irony, his attitude towards the Sicilians who appear in his writing:

Se ne parlo con tono di scherzo, vuol dire che l'affetto, che mi lega ad essi, è tale che io devo difendere la mia serietà con lo scherzo. Difatti, se nel parlar di loro, non mi appigliassi in fretta e in furia ai loro difetti, difficilmente riuscirei a sostenermi: i miei occhi si riempirebbero di lacrime, e le immagini di una emozione tutta meridionale affollerebbero il mio discorso. (p. 112)

Indeed, in Brancati's writing, his characters' defects are frequently portrayed in a sympathetic light, which sometimes raises questions about the author's position. Elsewhere, however, Brancati's criticism of the sort of faith held by

Rodolfo was less equivocal: he defined a totalitarian society as one in which

tutti i mezzi sono impiegati per sostituire la fede - cioè una rozza accondiscendenza, trasformata, con la paura, gli allettamenti e il contagio, in entusiasmo mistico - alla comune intelligenza. (17)

Brancati suggested that with a minimum of 'coscienza critica' it is possible to see the comical aspect of such a society, and it was this element which was to assume increasing importance in his writing.

In what can be seen as an analysis of his own development as a humorist, Brancati set down his theory that, under the Fascist regime, laughter was 'il castigo di pochi individui rimasti svegli e vivi alla società che s'irrigidiva in forme automatiche', and described the stages by which a young man could pass from the 'ubriachezza' caused by the prevalent conformismo to a critical position of this kind (18). Without seeking to justify the errors of his youth, Brancati attempted to explain the enthusiasm aroused in a young man by a mass movement: the author suggested that, without critical awareness, it is easy to confuse the repetition of the sounds made by thousands of others with the expression of the universal, to which all artists aspire (19). A second emotion is produced by the figure of the dictator, who, in a totalitarian society, seems to stand out as the only free man:

Può sembrare al giovane che lo spirito umano, cristallizzato nei milioni e milioni di sudditi, nel dittatore invece sia fluido, attivo, creativo, come un fiume alla sorgente. La storia, che ristagna in tutti gli altri, in quest'uomo sembra pulsare con tutta la sua forza. (20)

After a great effort, the author suggests, the young man realizes that his admiration of the dictator's supposed 'grandezza' is, in fact, admiration of the freedom the latter seems to have. Subsequently, he comes to realize that he is part of an enslaved society and that the dictator himself, in spite of appearances, is no freer than the other members of that society: 'I fili che legano con una estremità i burattini, legano con l'altra la mano del burattinaio' ('Appunti sul comico', p. 379). Brancati says that, at this point, the young man falls into a state of profound crisis, in which the society around him appears 'in forma mostruosa, addirittura da incubo' (21). If the young man is an artist,

al problema di come esprimere la sua protesta politica contro la società, si aggiunge quello, per lui forse più grave, di come entrare in rapporti con lei, rapporti di narratore coi fatti da narrare, in una parola, di artista con la sua materia. ('Appunti sul comico', p. 379)

Then, when he is capable of observing the people around him 'con mente tornata chiara', he notices,

questa volta con distacco, quanto di automatico, quanto di marionetta, di fantoccio, è nei suoi vicini. E questa volta, potrà ridere. La sua più o meno modesta missione di scrittore comico è nato. (pp. 379-80)

In this analysis, laughter is clearly suggested as the instrument to be used by 'reason' to denounce its antagonist, 'power'. These comments imply a conception of literature as the representation of society by and for individuals gifted with particular sensitivity (like Stendhal's 'happy few'), but also indicate the inherent

impotence of this type of 'social conscience'.

This reaction of Brancati to Fascism is similar to that provoked in other intellectuals by the experience of Fascism and Nazism. The image of the puppeteer and his puppets as symbols of the dictator and his subjects had appeared in Thomas Mann's story, Mario und der Zauberer (1930), set in Fascist Italy. Mann's Cavaliere Cipolla, the 'magician' of the title, is really a hypnotist who asserts his will over that of members of his audience and, among other things, has a number of them 'dance' on the stage at his command like puppets. Cipolla explains that the principle behind his art is akin to that which links the absolute ruler and the people:

Comandare e ubbidire rappresentano insieme un solo principio, una indissolubile unità; chi sa ubbidire, sa pure comandare, e inversamente; un pensiero è compreso nell'altro, come popolo e duce sono compresi uno nell'altro. (22)

Mann's character expresses ideas which anticipate Brancati's comments on the way in which this bond renders the dictator slave to the people:

Ma il lavoro, il durissimo ed estenuante lavoro, è in ogni modo opera sua, del duce e organizzatore, che in sé identifica volontà e ubbidienza: in lui trovano origine entrambi i principi, e questa è cosa molto gravosa. (Mario e il mago, pp. 51-2)

Although there is no evidence to suggest that he was familiar with this particular story, in his Diario romano, Brancati later commented on other works by Mann (23). Another German intellectual, the philosopher and sociologist, Max Horkheimer, suggested that the phenomenon of

conformismo owes much to the fact that it permits the masses an outlet for mimetic instincts repressed in modern society, and that the effect of modern demagogues' histrionics on the public is due in part to the fact that, 'dando espressione a istinti repressi, sembrano ribellarsi apertamente alla civiltà e dar voce alla rivolta della natura' (24). Horkheimer also gave his definition of the change undergone by laughter, which, he stated, in the eighteenth century, 'suonava come una nota coraggiosa dalla forza liberatrice', while, in the twentieth century, oggetto del riso non è più la moltitudine ansiosa di conformismo ma l'eccentrico che ancora osa pensare con la testa sua' (Eclisse della ragione, p. 104): according to this definition, Brancati's laughter is rooted in the Age of Reason.

Whereas in Brancati's earliest works of dissent, written in the period of crisis described above, there is a tragic clash between the influences of attivismo and contemplation, in Gli anni perduti, the novel which Brancati wrote between November 1934 and March 1936 (but which was only published in instalments in 1938, and did not appear as a volume until 1941), the author appears to have understood that humoristic writing offered him the best means of expressing his dissent. His umorismo is adopted in the description of the type of character drawn from the margins of sanity which he opposed to the irrationalism of attivismo.

The first part of Gli anni perduti describes the return from Rome of three young men to their home town of Natàca, the name Brancati gives to Catania in the novel. (The use of this invented name does not, however, prevent Brancati from

identifying the town as the birthplace of Vincenzo Bellini (Part III, Chapter 2).) Each of them has returned with his own disillusionment, but plans, after a brief rest, to leave Natàca and to resume his life in the capital.

Leonardo Barini, editor of a literary review, is suffering from a form of nervous exhaustion due to the disappearance from his life of 'la gioia', a feeling of satisfaction with everything, even the most banal of things, which Brancati mischievously describes in terms borrowed from the language of Reason, but about the irrationality of which he leaves us no doubts: 'La bella luce, che illuminava tutte le cose, e dava un senso anche alle sedie e al calamaio, s'era spenta' (25);

Se non fosse tornata la luce, se non fosse tornata la gioia che stava nel cuore senza ragione, così come adesso era passata senza ragione, egli non si sarebbe mosso da quel letto, da quella casa! (p. 6; my italics)

It is a feeling comparable to Federico's 'felicità' in the short story of that title, and one which is related to what Brancati saw as one of the greatest dangers of the age - unquestioning faith. Leonardo's crisis, however, is not caused by his questioning the foundations of his futile happiness, but simply by the feeling that he has been abandoned by it, and his only doubt regards the reason for this. Leonardo is not a contemplative hero, but to the Fascist censors it may have appeared that Brancati was satirizing such a figure, as had been his intention in the earlier novel, L'amico del vincitore.

Rodolfo De Mei, a young architect, is another figure in whose presentation the censors could feasibly have read a

criticism of a type of person incapable of action, and he, too, is shown to have irrational tendencies: undeterred by the fact that he had never done anything in his life, 'non si sapeva bene per quale ragione, si lasciava sfuggire frasi come: "Noi artisti... Io, come artista..."' (p. 10; my italics). Rodolfo, like Leonardo, is also obsessed by a worry, but one which he suppresses for the sake of a comfortable life, for he belongs to a class of people for whom thought is an unwelcome chore:

Di tanto in tanto, aggrottava la fronte, e una ruga tra ciglio e ciglio esprimeva l'unico sforzo in cui era impegnato tutto il suo essere: quello di non trasformare l'oscura angoscia che lo riempiva in questo chiaro pensiero. 'Ma dove sono andato a finire?' (p. 27)

Rodolfo, too, gets no further than packing his bags to return to Rome and, eventually, he resolves to stay a year in Natàca, where he has, at least, the shadow of a client (p. 35).

The third of the anti-heroes, Giovanni Luisi, tired of pursuing a post in Rome, slips back easily into the comfortable life offered by Natàca and the exaggerated attentions of his mother. His doubts and worries are momentary affairs because Giovanni is incapable of maintaining the same opinion for more than two minutes, and 'dire della stessa cosa ch'è bella, ch'è brutta, ch'è divertente, ch'è noiosa, ch'è nera, ch'è bianca, era veramente il suo forte (p. 16). In the description of this character, 'reason' and 'thought' are deprived of any real value:

Pensava che sarebbe andato presto a Roma, pensava che non vi sarebbe andato mai, pensava che forse ci sarebbe

andato, e alla fine non pensava più nulla se non ch'era tardi e bisogna comunque andare a cena. (p. 27)

His greatest effort of concentration is applied to the smoking of his pipe, and the resultant 'pensiero raccolto', like all his 'thoughts', indicates a kind of lethargy, a hibernation of his spirit, rather than an exercise of his reason (pp. 39-40).

Brancati's satire, however, remains indulgent towards the characters' faults, perhaps because it contains an element of self-satire. When Lisa Careni, in her 'common sense' manner, reproaches Leonardo for his moral cowardice, is not Brancati alluding perhaps to his own 'retreat to the womb', to Catania?

'A voi manca la gioia? A tutti manca la gioia o, almeno, nessuno ne ha in quella quantità che vorrebbe. Ma con questo? Ci si butta in provincia, non si lavora più, non si vive più?' (p. 38)

Natàca itself is a kind of stronghold of the irrational, filled with characters whose obsessions are corruptions of reason, reminiscent of those of don Eugenio and Ferdinando in De Roberto's I Vicerè: Professor Neri, for instance, the inventor of il morreale, a new and universal language which 'consisteva nel trovare le radici delle parole (radici: da radi x, rari misteri, voleva dire: tutto è chiaro)' (pp. 27-8); Leopoldi, whose invention of perpetual motion is based on a false syllogism and disregards the most elementary principles of physics (pp. 44-5); De Filippi and his Canzonelle spiritose, pastorals written in the dialect of Natàca, in which the poet describes the peasants' thoughts regarding natural phenomena and scientific and philosophical

theories (p. 89)! A figure of particular interest in this bestiary of the irrational is that of Rodolfo's phantom client, the duca Fausto Villadora, whose maniacal obsession with his health and with the need to avoid infection makes him a relative of De Roberto's Consalvo and Ferdinando, and of Sciascia's Judge Azar in Il contesto. The corruption of reason in Brancati's character is accompanied by a hallucinatory sharpening of the senses:

Questo ricco signore, da molto tempo, badava a non morire, con un affanno e uno scrupolo che gli avevano tolto l'appetito e il sonno. Non ch'egli fosse ammalato. Ma bisognava essere veramente ammalati per morire? e poi qual è l'uomo del tutto sano? I microbi fanno ressa da ogni parte, sono milioni, sono miliardi, non v'è cosa che non sia coperta di microbi. Essi sono invisibili e silenziosi, ma il ricco signore non era più in grado di dire che non li vedesse e non li sentisse. Egli li sentiva formicolare, la notte, sul cuscino e sulle coperte, li sentiva brusire leggermente sul nocciolo della pesca ch'era rimasto nel piatto del comodino. In quanto a vederli, non li vedeva proprio, ma di tanto in tanto qualcosa baluginava vicino alla sua bocca ed egli, ovunque si trovasse, a teatro o in un caffè, soffiava forte davanti a sé per cacciare lontani quei milioni di minuzzoli che volevano la sua morte. (Gli anni perduti, p. 20)

The observation of these eccentricities leads Enzo De Mei to the conclusion, parodying Pirandello's, that

i poveri pazzi non sono degl'infelici, ma dei burloni che, a un certo punto della loro vita, hanno puntato i piedi come gli asini, non han voluto più andare avanti, son rimasti fissi, fissati. (pp. 91-2; author's italics)

Ironically, this idea becomes Enzo's obsession and causes him eventually to lose his sanity (26).

The principal characters, with their hysterical outbursts and their mammismo, and the futility of their existence, frittered away in the search for ways to pass the time,

contrast strongly with the official Fascist image of a virile and active youth, the irrational nature of which Brancati had examined earlier. The association of these characters' lack of reason, however, with non-virile traits corresponds to a conventional identification of reason as a male preserve. It is worth noting, in particular, the 'emasculatation' of Enzo De Mei through his loss of reason, represented for his brother, Rodolfo, by the puppet character who warns, '"Badate!... Maschio usci di casa e maschio ci voglio ritornare!"' - Enzo had left home, 'maschio', in command of his reason, that is, but he returned home altered (Gli anni perduti, p. 149).

The life of Natàca, into which Leonardo and friends settle after having deluded themselves that they remain masters of their own destinies, is described in all its sterility as 'una vita che non arriva a partorire mai nulla' (p. 23). In contrast with this sterility is the virile ring of the rhetoric of Francesco Buscaino, the entrepreneur of rather dubious background whose decision to recruit Natàca's young men to build a panoramic tower coincides with Leonardo's evocation, at the end of Part I of the novel, of 'un lavoro più nobile, qualcosa che dia uno scopo unico ai nostri sforzi, qualcosa che richieda, oltre che la fatica, il sacrificio e l'amore' (p. 57). (The young men, and Buscaino with them, will dedicate ten years of their lives to the construction of the tower, only to discover in the end that the opening of such buildings to the public is banned by a bye-law passed a year before their return to Natàca and intended to avoid providing people with a means

of committing suicide.) Buscaino's way of expressing himself is clearly a parody of Fascist rhetoric:

'Che città!' pensava. 'Tutta di case piatte come scatoloni... Nulla di verticale... Oh, benedetti i grattacieli! Saranno magari presuntuosi, spinosi, brutti quanto volete; ma danno l'idea di una città in piedi, di una città sveglia, di una città pronta a marciare verso l'infinito!' (p. 62)

Brancati's idea of the project of a panoramic tower was partly inspired by the real-life 'Torre Alessi' in Catania (27), but corresponds to the narrator's need of a spectacular but futile project to which the young men can dedicate their energies, in which, in Freudian terms, they can 'sublimate' their unfulfilled desires (28). At the same time, the tower has an obvious phallic value, which is a paradoxical reminder of the theme of sterility in the novel. A further allusion to the 'virility' of the project can be found in Buscaino's dismissal of the objection that, perhaps, nobody will want to pay to climb the tower:

Nessuno vi sale!... Già, e se il figlio, che metteremo al mondo, non avrà il buco necessario e non potrà fare pipì! Certo, sarà un grave inconveniente. Ma quale padre, nel momento in cui si dà all'opera dei figli ha un pensiero simile e, avendolo, lo giudica un pensiero degno di considerazione? (Gli anni perduti, p. 70)

The advent of Buscaino and his project provides the young men of Natàca with a cause to which they can devote themselves with unquestioning faith, but it becomes clear that this easy faith is, in itself, the real object of their desires. In a letter to Francesco Guglielmino dated 20 January 1942, Brancati explained how the period of composition of Gli anni perduti had coincided with his

recognition of 'tutta la stupidità dell'attivismo e di coloro che, non avendo un serio modo di vivere, trovano, negli attivisti, medici o guide miracolosi' (Scuderi, 'Un carteggio inedito', p. 140). Buscaino personifies this irrational attivismo, and his corruption of logical discourse is described as 'una prepotenza brutale' (Gli anni perduti, p. 94). His irrational vein frequently reveals itself in his rhetoric:

'Muoversi, fare qualcosa, non importa come e dove, ma fare qualcosa di concreto! Quello che si fa, in ultima analisi, è sempre ben fatto; solo quello che non si fa è malfatto'. (pp. 99-100; my italics)

Rodolfo and Leonardo quickly fall under the spell of Buscaino's irrational ideology and adopt the new morality he offers, 'il cui bene era agire e il male dubitare'. The beginning of their slide into a state of unquestioning faith can be seen in Leonardo's reply to Rodolfo, who asks him if the construction of the tower is perhaps the noble cause for which they had been waiting:

'Forse!' mormorò Leonardo, mentre una mano gli stringeva il cervello lentamente. 'Non forse: certo!... Di tanto in tanto, però credo di essere diventato un imbecille. Ma non ha importanza. E forse ho torto; anzi, ho torto di sicuro... La torre! Sì, va benissimo! Costruiamo la torre'. (p. 80)

Rodolfo discovers that when he makes a conscious effort to think only good of Buscaino and the tower, 'to think', that is to say, 'con bontà e senza spirito critico',

la sua fatica di pensare si è infinitamente ridotta, è diventata quasi nulla: segno, dunque, che la mente umana, quando pensa liberamente, di una persona o del prossimo,

per nove decimi ne pensa male. Oh, che sollievo adesso!
(p. 102)

Leonardo's attitude is barely less enthusiastic: 'Non dubitava più che Buscaino avesse portato a Natàca un po' di vita, non dubitava più sull'utilità morale e pratica della torre panoramica' (p. 102). He is prepared to accept this unthinking satisfaction as a substitute for 'la gioia', and if Rodolfo's condition is described as 'una contentezza morale di forma cronica' (p. 103), Leonardo's state is, to say the least, serious. Only Giovanni still experiences 'qualche momento di diffidenza': as before, however, this is due not to a rational analysis of the situation, but rather to the irrational state of his mind, 'la dolce confusione in cui viveva, e in cui tutte le cose sembravano passare allo stato di vapori mobili e cangianti' (p. 103). The chaos of Giovanni's mind, however, is 'illuminated' by his feeling that he, himself, is 'un uomo eccezionale', worthy of the important post which he is certain of obtaining from his benefactor in Rome, so that even he tends towards an ever more constant acceptance of Buscaino and the tower.

As I have pointed out elsewhere ('I piaceri del dissenso'; see note (19) above), Brancati's criticism of those who, like Rodolfo, surrender their critical spirit for the sake of an effortless existence, creates a bond between his writing and that of Italian illuministi such as Pietro Verri and Sebastiano Franci, founded as it is on the exaltation of the individual's rational capacities. Franci, for example, writing in Il Caffé (Milan, 1764-5), condemned those who

adottano i principi a caso sulla fede altrui, ammettono imprudentemente i sistemi con puerile e vergognosa

credulità, ed amano piuttosto correre pericolo di restare ingannati, che di esporsi alla fatica. (29)

Franci's article goes on to describe the loss of the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood by those who dare not look beyond the confines of 'la opinione comune al secolo, al luogo dove essi vivono', convinced, as they are, that 'la voce del popolo è una voce divina, e molti occhi assai più vedono che uno solo' (p. 197). These are the people defined by Brancati as 'i "contenti di vivere nel proprio tempo"', and characterized by 'la viltà metodica, la rinuncia a ogni aspirazione e ripugnanza, l'ottusità dei sensi più delicati' (30). Verri, himself, commented on the fact that 'di tutte le fatiche quella ch'è più insopportabile all'uomo si è il far uso della ragione', and used this as an argument against 'i giudizi popolari', each of which, he said, is nothing more than 'il giudizio di sei o sette... ripetuto, come dall'eco, da venti o trenta mila' (31). This opinion was to be echoed in some of Brancati's other post-war writings. In his appeal to society to reject 'i perversi piaceri del conformismo' Brancati asked:

Chi dice mai: 'Tutti la pensano così, dunque la verità bisogna trovarla da un'altra parte'? Chi prova più il piacere di cercare dentro di se stesso, allontanandosi a perdita d'udito dai clamori popolari, una voce discorde?
(32)

In 'I piaceri della stupidità', he stated that 'dar ragione al numero, non osando dichiarare inferiore un esemplare umano, per il fatto che esso è ripetuto in milioni e milioni di copie', represented for him the most fatal error of the times in which he lived (33).

Brancati's rational idealism, as expressed in these later writings, can be traced back to Gli anni perduti, with its portrait of a tendency to renounce individual reason in favour of comfortable complacency. The novel can be seen as a warning against the dangers of the surrender of one's critical spirit, and a further development of Brancati's argument against the trend towards an ideology founded on action. On one level, Gli anni perduti is an allegorical representation of the attraction experienced by the author's generation to one such ideology and of the disillusionment which Brancati had lived through and felt awaited those who, like him, had embraced the Fascist myth.

If, on the one hand, it is possible to see in Gli anni perduti the author's discovery of his vocation as a humorist, on the other, one must also observe how, particularly in Part III, the novel is pervaded by images of death. Fleeing from the town hall, where he has just learnt of the existence of a bye-law prohibiting the opening to the public of tall buildings, 'perché l'esperienza insegna che presto essi diventano mezzo e fomite di suicidio' (Gli anni perduti, p. 167), Buscaino is confronted by the sight of the tower and by the vision of the document he has been shown:

Come quando, da una parte della memoria spunta il caro amico Tizio così come lo abbiamo visto l'ultima volta: giovane, lieto, pieno di vita, e dall'altra il telegramma che ci ha testé annunziato la morte. (p. 168)

In the tower Buscaino finds himself surrounded by the food which was to have been consumed in the banquet to celebrate its opening: biscuits called ossa di morti, and carcasses with staring eyes (pp. 169-70).

The corrupting presence of death is seen in all aspects of life. There are the tragic and premature deaths of Paolo Filesi (pp. 54-5) and of Luisa, the fiancée of Lello Raveni (pp. 138-9): the latter is juxtaposed to the not so tragic dilemma concerning the 'posto' to be allocated to Giovanni Luisi's late patron (pp. 137-8). Professor Leopoldi dies, too (pp. 177-8), but it is not so much in the actual deaths as in the atmosphere which envelops everything that Brancati develops the theme. The celebrations for the centenary of the birth of Bellini (occurring in 1901, while the hundredth anniversary of his death in 1835 coincides with the writing of the novel, and would set the events described firmly in the Fascist period) are a reminder of his premature death (p. 141), fill the air with 'voci di morti, voci di celebri tenori e soprani d'altri tempi' (p. 148), and inspire grotesque meditation on the transience of life: 'La ragazza incinta pensava con orrore che il piccolo uomo che le cresceva in grembo, anche lui, prima che fossero spirati cent'anni, sarebbe appartenuto alla morte' (34). A moonlit night provokes the narrator (although the idea could be attributed to the consciousness of Buscaino) to comment that 'l'universo sembra destinato a esseri ben più di lusso che non siano gli uomini', who appear like 'vermi fangosi in un piatto d'argento'. The mortal nature of humanity is reiterated by reference to 'la cenere che abbiamo sul vestito,... le scarpe polverose' (my italics), but what renders us unworthy of the universe is the very fact of being mortal: 'L'altro fatto poi: quello di dover morire, ci accompagna come un orribile lezzo di cui dobbiamo arrossire

ad ogni passo' (Gli anni perduti, p. 145). Natàca is described as 'una funesta città' (p. 152) and its panorama presents itself to Buscaino like a vast cemetery:

Quella miriade di tetti distesi sopra una vita di cui Buscaino aveva fatto sì dura e lunga esperienza (uno, laggiù, copriva il duca Fausto Villadora; un altro copriva il cavaliere De Filippi; un altro, Leopoldi... e via via all'intorno ciascun tetto aveva il suo personaggio e il suo schiavone da coprire. (pp. 156-7)

The city then is like a necropolis housing the living who are indistinguishable from the dead, while, we are told, 'i nuovi vivi somigliavano ai morti' (35).

At the close of the novel, the three young men who have thrown away their lives by following Buscaino are each surrounded by reminders of death. Rodolfo De Mei, no longer filled with faith, is left like an empty shell, without any feelings except for the fear that,

se la morte si provava [trovava?] a passare vicino a lui, e lo vedeva così vuoto, così allampanato e nullo, pur avendo altro da fare, gli avrebbe messo sopra un piede, come a dire: 'Questo intanto l'occupo io'. (Gli anni perduti, p. 180)

Giovanni Luisi's suitcases,

gonfie di indumenti da viaggio, di magliettine, di marmellate, di bottiglie, di rimedi contro il mal di capo e di libri che spiegavano l'Oriente a colui che per la prima volta lo vedesse dal mare, eran rimaste a bocca aperta, come uno che sia morto per un grosso boccone andatogli di traverso. (pp. 180-1)

Giovanni's response to the failure of the project is to sleep, but it is possible to see in Giovanni's ever more tranquil sleep an imitation of death:

Egli dormiva. E nel sonno, viaggiava. Ma poi i sonni diventarono più quieti, e anche in essi egli non viaggiò

più; e la visione migliore, ch'egli avesse dormendo, era ormai quella di se stesso sdraiato sul letto, col pugno chiuso sotto il collo, proprio com'egli si trovava a stare nel momento in cui sognava. (p. 181)

Leonardo Barini explains to Lisa Careni how his life has been dedicated to 'quella gioia che tanto più mi appartiene, in quanto le son rimasto fedele sino al punto di non far nulla e di considerarmi come morto, nel tempo in cui essa non c'è stata' (p. 183). When Lisa points out to him that in the mean time he has grown old, his lament and the consolation it offers him are indeed like those linked to a real death:

'Povero Leonardo! Povero Leonardo! Povero Leonardo!' Da questo pensiero, che si faceva sempre più dolce e piagnucoloso, egli ricevette un buon conforto, come talvolta lo si trova nel canticchiare un motivo che torna molto a proposito per la strada che dobbiamo percorrere da soli e le cose che vogliamo dimenticare. 'Povero Leonardo!...' (p. 184)

In spite of the hostility towards the regime and its values expressed by Brancati in his works, the author is reported to have joined the 'Associazione fascista degli scrittori' in 1937, the year in which he taught at the Istituto Magistrale 'IX maggio' in Caltanissetta (36). This action was almost certainly dictated by the idea that it gave the author, through his writing, at least some opportunity to criticize the regime, and should be seen in the context of the conquest of Ethiopia (1936) and the setbacks suffered by the republican forces in Spain during 1937: these international events must have created the feeling that an outright refusal to compromise with the regime, which, at least in the foreseeable future, was to

remain in power, would have led to sterile isolation, and it would be interesting to know how many other writers adopted this pragmatic approach during these years. In any case, the stories Il vecchio con gli stivali and La noia del '937 (1944), examined below, cast some light on the mood of these years.

Two stories written in 1937, Il sogno di Lucia and Un matrimonio disapprovato, were later published in the volume In cerca di un sì (1939). Neither is of particular value except as a document regarding the nature of Brancati's antifascism, and both reveal his analogous rejection of communist ideals and ideology.

Il sogno di Lucia (37), despite being set 'in una città dell'Oriente d'Europa, molto lontana di qui, e in cui vige il "sistema collettivo"' (p. 95), is a satire on society under any totalitarian regime, characterized, as Brancati saw it, by an all-embracing conformismo which stifled the expression of any intelligence: while her boyfriend, as part of a group of workers, is forced to continue marching pointlessly around a square, simply because those in command have neglected to give the order to stop, Lucia falls asleep and dreams of official assemblies of sleepers, in which 'tutti stavano nella medesima positura e tutti avevano gli stessi pensieri, cioè non ne avevano punti, e tutti gli stessi sentimenti' (p. 102), and of those who 'continuano ad esser morti', noteworthy for their supreme composure (p. 103).

The story of Francesco Rapisardi and his 'matrimonio disapprovato' shows how Brancati, while condemning the values of bourgeois society, refused to idealize il popolo.

Professor Rapisardi marries Agata, 'un'operaia che parla solo in dialetto' (38), thereby scandalizing his peers, who attempt to demonstrate to him in various ways the unworthiness of his wife, but succeed only in revealing their own hypocrisy and the poverty of their own values. Rapisardi's choice is influenced partly by the desire to escape the petty materialism of the bourgeoisie, and partly by a sentimental ideal regarding the nature of the working classes based on the beauty, innocence and modesty of Agata. Despite the discovery of prevailing vulgarity among his beloved popolo, Rapisardi clings to his romantic ideal of a class which has probably never existed, and mourns Agata's death as that of 'l'ultima donna semplice', the last survivor of his ideal, 'del buono, del caro, del modesto popolo' (pp. 123-4). The story ends rather tritely with the protagonist's return to his own environment and the discovery of an identical coarseness in his own class. While, in Un matrimonio disapprovato, there are moments in which Brancati succeeds in bringing a smile to the reader's face - for example, the description of the disgust felt by the newspaper editor, Panariti, at the idea 'che un uomo colto potesse scambiare quello che si pensa con quello che si scrive... "Il popolo io lo lodo, ma non vado a sposarmelo!"' (p. 115) - but there is an overall tendency to facile moralizing in this story.

These two stories, with their rejection both of totalitarianism and of the myth of an ideal proletariat, reveal the principal reasons for Brancati's subsequent refusal to support communism, and also explain the criticism

which was to be levelled against him, for his own individualist idealism is, indeed, hardly constructive.

A further indication of the surprising degree of freedom enjoyed by writers in Fascist Italy (39) can be seen in the short story, Il bacio, published in Longanesi's Omnibus in 1938 (40). This is a satire on the myth of the Duce to which Brancati himself had paid homage in his youth (41). The story of Riccardo Triglino and his uncontrollable desire to plant a kiss on the cheek of the Sovrintendente during an official visit ridicules the irrational nature of the cult of the dictator and, at the same time, the suggestion of underlying homosexuality and the sketch of a regime spying on its own people were bound to offend the Fascist authorities' sense of propriety and of their own dignity:

'Figliuolo mio', ripeté l'Intendente, 'quando io ero giovane come voi, non desideravo altro che baciare le donne, e non baciavo difatti che le donne'.

Triglino non riusciva a capire.

'Figliuolo mio, il Sovrintendente, noi lo ammiriamo, lo amiamo, lo veneriamo, ma non possiamo, figliuolo mio, non possiamo baciarlo!' (p. 96)

It could be suggested that in this attempt to dissuade Triglino from his intention by 'le vie della ragione' (p. 96), one can see how such worship of the dictator and rational discourse, as traditionally intended, are mutually exclusive. This idea is further reinforced by the reference to Triglino's activity as the author of a work which is clearly akin to Brancati's own glorification of the figure of Mussolini in the play, Everest, mentioned above:

'Voi siete un uomo ragionevole. Siete anche un bravo scrittore. Mi piace quello che avete scritto sul lato divino del nostro Sovrintendente. Vi esprimete con eleganza... Ma voi... che siete un bravo scrittore,

perché non usate la parola per esprimervi? La parola, santo cielo, la parola!' (p. 97)

In this episode, Brancati demonstrates how he was aware, like the other two writers studied here, of the possibility of misappropriating the written word and the concept of rationalism with which it is generally associated: Triglino's writing is not the product of reason, but of the surrender of that faculty to the myth of the Sovrintendente (42).

It was in the years 1937 and 1938, coinciding partly with the time he spent as a teacher in Caltanissetta, that Brancati wrote his 'Lettere al direttore' for Longanesi's Omnibus. In 1950 Brancati was to write of these letters,

la corrispondenza era pubblica nella forma, ma in effetti privatissima, scritta in un inchiostro simpatico che solo il disgusto per la società d'allora rendeva nero. Chi possedeva quel disgusto era in grado di rendere visibili e leggibili le parole. (Diario romano, p. 259 (December 1950))

Once again, Brancati's words reveal his view of writing as a consolatory process, as defined above. In any case, the Fascist censors, belonging to that group of people who were contented, were unable to see the criticism implicit in the portrayal contained in the letters of a boring and frivolous society. The short story Confusione in montagna (43), written in the same period and in the same 'stile allusivo' (Diario romano, p. 260), contains a thorough condemnation of the conformismo that was a characteristic of Fascist society. A first allusion to the regime and to this conformismo can be seen in the reference to the 'lupi della montagna', the group of skiers noted for their daring acts

and arrogance, and recognizable by their particular style of dress. However, in the confusion of the mountain bar during a storm, the 'wolves' are lost in a crowd of skiers to which the author attributes all the dignity of 'un gruppo di anatre attorno a delle miche galleggianti' (p. 214). Such is the confusion caused by the uniformity of appearance of the girls in the bar that Emma, vainly staring into the mirrors on the walls is uncertain whether the reflection she sees is hers or that of another girl: like the smug, complacent people that the story is directed against, however, Emma is not in the least distressed by the loss of her individuality, and even finds the atmosphere pleasant and comforting (pp. 214-15). In the description of the scene in the bar there is a clear reference to the coarseness, superficiality and stupidity which Brancati identified with the regime.

In Confusione in montagna, Brancati alludes to those who were content in the conformist society, and suggests that nobody was more content than the mediocre man who, in the confusion, hoped that his mediocrity would be lost, together with the individuality of those surrounding him. In this story, however, 'il piccolo uomo dalle mani gialle e dalla faccia grossa e butterata' is frustrated in his attempt to blend in with the 'beautiful people' around him by the little girl who stares sadly at the spectacle of his ugliness (pp. 217-19). The author implies that, although conformity may reduce many to a level of mediocrity, any hope that it will raise somebody from that level is a false one, and this 'truth' can be seen by anybody who, like the

child, remains detached from the confusion. The story, then, can be seen as an allegory of the appeal of a conformist society for the mediocre and of their eventual disillusionment, as later analysed by Brancati in the Diario romano:

Sappiamo quanto basso e barbaro egoismo si celi nell'amore per la vita collettiva... E' il desiderio di nutrire la propria esangue personalità con quanto di bello, di geniale e di buono dovrebbe essere sacrificato dai contemplativi, dai liberi e dai solitari. Desiderio che, naturalmente, rimane inappagato perché ciò che un grande uomo perde in questo campo non va a beneficio di nessun imbecille, e tanto meno della collettività. (Diario romano, pp. 165-6 (April 1949))

The ugly little man is forced to concede defeat and to recognize his mediocrity:

Ecco, bene, pensa l'ometto, a me il mio naso! E la mia gobba? Anche la mia gobba! E le mie mani gialle? Anche le mie mani gialle!... Tutto quello che mi appartiene, a me, sempre a me! La confusione per gli altri, non per me. (Confusione in montagna, p. 219)

Another racconto published in 1938, Sogno di un valzer (44), has been compared by Paolo Mario Sipala to the novel Gli anni perduti, with the organization of the ball corresponding to the project of the panoramic tower: the difference for Sipala being in the conclusion, marked in the racconto by corruption, madness and death, rather than by a return to stagnation as in the novel, suggested, perhaps, by Giovanni Luisi's retreat into sleep. This analysis serves to confirm the Catania-based critic's theory that Brancati's aim in writing Sogno di un valzer was to accentuate the tragic tone of the story by transferring it to a society, that of western Sicily, 'più incline all'exasperazione dei

problemi intellettuali e ad un endemico pirandellismo' (45). This opinion is based on a rather literal interpretation of Brancati's ironic letter from Caltanissetta to the director of Omnibus, 'Gli amici di Nissa', in which the author described the city as the watershed between the east of Sicily, with its 'senso del comico', and the metaphysical gravity of the west of the island (46). It ignores, however, the fact that, as has been pointed out above, the conclusion of Gli anni perduti, too, is dominated by the themes of corruption, madness and, in particular, death.

The Nissa of Sogno di un valzer conforms to the model of totalitarian society described by the Austrian writer, Robert Musil (1880-1942), speaking in Vienna in 1937, according to which 'le stupidità occasionali dei singoli' become 'stupidità costituzionale della collettività' (47): this type of reaction to the rise of totalitarian regimes, attributed to a wave of stupidity sweeping through society, is typical of liberal intellectuals such as Musil, Croce and, as we have already seen, Brancati. The latter's analysis of stupidity in Sogno di un valzer concurs to a remarkable extent with that of Musil. In the figure of the semi-literate greengrocer, Giovanni La Pergola, we find an example of Musil's 'stupidità onesta', which he defined thus: 'E' un po' dura di comprendonio. E', come si dice, "lenta a capire". E' povera d'idee e di parole, e maldestra nel loro uso' ('Sulla stupidità', p. 255). Beside La Pergola we see Ottavio Carrubba, 'la persona più rispettabile di Nissa, per la sua cultura profonda' (Sogno di un valzer, p. 9), who is the foremost representative of what Musil termed

'stupidità sostenuta', the meaning of which is 'incultura, falsa cultura, cultura che si è costituita su false basi, sproporzione tra il contenuto e il vigore della cultura' ('Sulla stupidità', p. 257), a perfect description of the atmosphere of Brancati's Nissa. The following description of the friendship between La Pergola and Carrubba reveals the nature of their respective defects:

A questo Amico [La Pergola] egli dava i suoi manoscritti prima di pubblicarli; e l'altro vi portava uno sguardo diradato, al lume della candelina collocata fra le mele e le pere, e ne leggeva pesantemente qualche sillaba. Poi riconsegnava il manoscritto a Carrubba, con un sorriso impacciato. 'Diavolo di un uomo', mormorava Carrubba. 'Ha capito tutto, lui!' Ma anche se non avesse capito nulla, La Pergola era lo stesso una persona straordinaria! (48)

The similarity of Brancati's ideas to those being expounded by Musil at roughly the same time validates the theory that, just as the target of the Austrian writer's discussion of stupidity was the 'imitazione sociale dei vizi spirituali' in Nazi Germany (p. 259), the object of Brancati's criticism in Sogno di un valzer was the resurgence of stupidity, which he saw as a phenomenon linked to Fascism. The expression of these ideas reflect a common need to believe that the totalitarianism which they were witnessing was only the product of a corruption of the reason on which their universe was constructed, while it might now be argued that Fascism and Nazism were, in fact, consequences of inherent faults in liberal democratic society and its humanistic philosophy.

Among the short stories published in the volume In cerca di un sì (1939) is La nave del sonno (pp. 135-72), in which Brancati once again juxtaposed the themes of attivismo and

sonno. In the first of four parts, the narrator, Luigi, describes how, at the age of twenty-four, his friend, Raffaele, passed from youthful vitality to a state of lethargy and inertia, indicated by 'uno sguardo sempre meno curioso' (p. 138). The second and third parts of the racconto describe Raffaele's transformation under the influence of his new acquaintances, 'uomini liberi', 'attivi', 'non impacciati da scrupoli', who replace his old friends, now disdained as 'troppo inariditi dagli scrupoli e dai pensieri' (p. 145). His new vitality, however, is not the same as that of his youth - the light in his eyes is like the sparkle in the eyes of a drunk - and his actions are without practical value, carried out for the sake of doing something and with horrendous brutality. In the final part, Raffaele relapses once more into lethargy, and the narrator is left with only a memory of an intelligence stifled by the times:

Rividi gli occhi del piccolo Raffaele, al tempo in cui non passavano dall'opaco sonno a uno scintillio da ubbriachezza e poi di nuovo all'opaco sonno. Occhi intelligenti, forti, gentili, il cui fulgore mi pareva soavemente fondersi con la mite luce celeste. Occhi fatti per un tempo, e smarriti in un altro che li aveva spenti. (p. 171)

La nave del sonno has clear thematic links with other works by Brancati, such as Gli anni perduti, and the reference to the 'ubbriachezza' provoked in Raffaele by his contact with the men of action is unmistakably parallel to Brancati's subsequent description of his own 'ubbriachezza di stupidità' in I fascisti invecchiano, quoted above. As in Gli anni perduti, the sonno which Brancati opposes to

official attivismo itself has a negative, 'irrational' value, and, once again, it is possible to see Brancati's belief in the myth of a golden age of reason before the triumph of stupidity and totalitarianism.

Brancati's story, L'amico Prospero, first published in Il Popolo di Roma of 17 October 1940, and later republished with the title Un uomo di fede (now in Sogno di un valzer, pp. 250-2), begins with a reflection on compulsive liars, which serves as introduction to the story of the 'credulone' Prospero, who, in contrast needs to be lied to. In the initial description of the figure of the habitual liar, the narrator refers to one such character in Gogol's play, Marriage (1842), but it is by no means a gratuitous allusion, for the character is 'un consigliere di Corte, ... un personaggio distinto' (p. 250), a fact which encourages the reader to draw a parallel to members of the government at the time, perhaps even to Mussolini himself (49). A further allusion to the regime's propaganda machine can be seen in the comment on 'coloro che hanno pensato sempre di far molto, e sempre hanno fatto poco', and who, 'nel raccontare il loro passato, pigliano per buono e già attuato ogni loro proposito' (p. 250). Once again one has proof of the ineffectiveness of Fascist censorship, especially in the following comments, coming, as they did, so soon after Mussolini's declaration of war on 10 June 1940:

Di bugiardi le città sono piene; ogni popolo, civile o barbarico che sia, ne conta a migliaia; nella sconfitta e nella vittoria, con gli eserciti che fuggono e con quelli che inseguono, va di corsa un numero rilevante di bugiardi. (Sogno di un valzer, p. 250)

In such comments it is possible to see Brancati's intuition that Italy was far from prepared for the war into which Mussolini had plunged it, and that official claims to the contrary were destined to lead to disaster. With the benefit of hindsight, one can possibly see in the combined figures of the compulsive liar and the 'credulone' described by Brancati a resemblance to the older Mussolini, as he is portrayed by Mack Smith in his biography of the dictator (50). It is probably not by chance that Brancati makes Prospero's interlocutor a colonel, who, when he tells Prospero the truth, leaves him 'avvilito' and can only animate the latter by telling him the most outrageous lies (Sogno di un valzer, p. 251): Mussolini is reported to have dismissed as unimportant, for example, the 'technical objections' of his chiefs of staff to the attack on Greece in October 1940 and later ignored his field commanders when they told him that the army in Russia was insufficiently equipped, preferring each time to delude himself into believing that his command of military operations guaranteed a lightning victory, which was basically a question of will-power (Mack Smith, pp. 298-304, p. 314, p. 335). In the example given of Prospero's need for lies coloured with strange names for things which have never existed - 'una rucans (arma inventata da poco, consistente in una freccia che lancia lampade rosse, perforanti e accecanti' (Sogno di un valzer, p. 251) - there is an allusion to the popular myth later described explicitly by Brancati in his play, Raffaele (1948), and referred to by Sciascia in relation to the disappearance of the Sicilian physicist Ettore Majorana in 1938, regarding

'scoperte lasciate da Marconi a buon punto e che avrebbero reso - in mancanza d'altro, per come si andava prendendo coscienza - invincibile l'Italia nella guerra' (51): it is interesting to note Mack Smith's report that in 1943, in the face of defeat, Mussolini was still attempting to bolster up his confidence and that of others with talk of a mysterious weapon soon to be launched against the enemy (Mack Smith, p. 335). Under the dictatorship, the reality presented by power was, more than the manipulation of truth documented by the other two writers studied here, a complete fabrication.

One of Brancati's best known works, Don Giovanni in Sicilia, was written in 1940 and published the following year. While Mussolini was leading Italy into a war for which it was totally unprepared, with the conviction that by subjecting the nation to hardship he was producing a more serious and martial race (Mack Smith, Mussolini, pp. 293-4, p. 329), Brancati was countering this delusion with a portrait of an eternally frivolous and passive people, and it is indeed possible that the description of the protagonist, Giovanni Percolla, as identical to the portrait of his father and to the statue of his grandfather contains a pointed reference to the dictator's aspirations (52). Don Giovanni in Sicilia focuses on the phenomenon of gallismo, which Brancati was later to describe as 'il sentirsi o immaginarsi "bravi nelle faccende amorose"' (53). The novel and the later article both refer to the fact that the pleasures of gallismo lie not so much in the subject's exercise of his prowess as in the belief that he possesses it and in the fabrication of a past full of sexual adventures, which, in

fact, masks an altogether different reality:

Se la loro esperienza del piacere era enorme, quella delle donne era poverissima. Spogliato delle bugie, di quello che essi narravano come accaduto e che era invece un puro desiderio, o era accaduto a un qualche altro, il loro passato di don Giovanni si poteva raccontarlo in dieci minuti. (Don Giovanni in Sicilia, pp. 28-9)

In this attitude one can see a resemblance to the habitual liars described in Un uomo di fede, and here, too, one could feasibly attribute to the writer the intention of writing a satire on the gulf separating the regime's claims and its achievements, but such an intention is never made explicit in the novel. What is evident, as has already been suggested above, is the fact that Brancati's depiction of society, both in Catania and Milan, as revolving around sex, and in the former to the extent that it can be referred to as 'quello che viene concordemente ritenuto il più nobile, sacro ed eroico atto della vita' ('Piaceri del "gallismo"', p. 149), is contrary to the official Fascist ethic, particularly in time of war: compare the importance attributed to it by the characters described by Brancati with Mussolini's comment in September 1940 to the crown princess, Maria José, that war was 'the one truly beautiful action that made life worth living' (Mack Smith, p. 297).

Don Giovanni in Sicilia merits a more detailed study, both from a psycho-analytical point of view and as a parody of stilnovismo, but here my comments will be limited to a few observations on the anti-heroic nature of its protagonist and on the way reason is portrayed as constantly being stifled. At forty years of age, Giovanni's sloth and need of sleep are such that it becomes impossible for him to

listen to a friend for longer than three minutes before falling asleep, and even the effort of pronouncing words correctly proves to great: 'Il languore cominciava a Giovanni fin dal pomeriggio, quando egli faceva seriamente discorsi come: "La lina stasera non usci"' (p. 32). On falling in love, such is the state of subjection into which the presence of Ninetta casts him that he is unable to pronounce a word to her, and, in spite of the exhortations of his friend, Panarini, to make use of the god-given gift of speech, he is only able to make a sound which is more animal-like than anything: "Parla, aprila codesta bocca! Dio ci ha dato la parola!" "Parlerò, sì!" mugolò Giovanni, nel fondo del petto' (p. 72). The significance of these grotesque details becomes evident when one considers how, in the rationalism of Descartes, for example, speech is identified as the faculty which distinguishes humans from other animals (see Cottingham, Rationalism, pp. 126-7). Even after their engagement, Giovanni's fear of the intimacy which marriage will bring is described as 'un malessere del quale non si rendeva ragione' (p. 100), while the jealousy which erupts in him after their wedding is recognized as irrational:

Sceglieva senza ragione, e sapendo chiaramente di averlo scelto senza ragione, uno di coloro che frequentavano la sua casa, e su costui rovesciava il suo frenetico miscuglio di sentimenti diversi che poi si sommava nel desiderio che quell'uomo non esistesse. (p. 132: my italics)

The success of Don Giovanni in Sicilia has resulted in the aspects of Sicilian life depicted in it becoming part of the often rigid image which many people still have of the

island's society. Interestingly, in this very novel, Brancati himself pokes fun at this type of stereotyping, albeit in a somewhat ambiguous fashion and, to be fair, it is also true that he, like other Sicilian writers, including Sciascia, occasionally resorts to generalizations when it suits his own purpose. Giovanni and Ninetta's Milanese friends identify the Sicilian man with 'la "vita sana", ... l'ignoranza, l'azione' (p. 122), and delight in Giovanni's Sicilian figures of speech, which he finds himself using only after his arrival in Milan (p. 126). Giovanni fails to live up to the Milanese women's expectations of the Sicilian male, but they, on the contrary, are all presented by Brancati as corresponding to the Sicilian male's image of northern women expressed by Muscarà's father: "'Sono vecchio, e mi regolo col naso!... Odore di donne per bene, di donne a modo, con la testa sulle spalle, non ne sento da nessuna parte!'" (p. 129). The expression, 'con la testa sulle spalle', implies a form of reason and, despite the ambiguity of Brancati's own position regarding the subject, casts an equivocal light on the 'common sense' of the patriarchy. The form of reason implied here is clearly rooted in patriarchal ideology, and this raises questions about the practice of seeking to oppose attivismo, instinct and profondismo with 'common sense' (54).

As a vindication of the ironic portrait of the Sicilians in Don Giovanni in Sicilia, Brancati published the article, 'Argomento preferito', which first appeared at around this time and was later republished with the addition of a long note as 'I piaceri della maldicenza' (55). Brancati defended

his 'tono di scherzo' and the choice of the Sicilians' defects as subject matter of his works as a form of vaccination against sentimentalism, given that he was linked to them by a profound affection. Most importantly, in the note added in 1943, Brancati justified his use of irony, which is fundamentally a form of self-irony, as an exercise in enlightenment and an antidote to the rhetoric of power (I piaceri, p. 77), and, to Sicilian literature, he attributed what he referred to as the modernity of Sicilian society, with its ability to laugh at itself (p. 79).

By 1943, Brancati was in ever more open conflict with the regime and left Rome to return to Sicily. The Allied invasion of the island in June of that year and the subsequent occupation meant that he was soon able to write freely about the years of Fascism, which he described in the two stories Il vecchio con gli stivali and La noia del '937 (1944). At the same time, however, Brancati observed the horrors and injustices which accompanied the liberation from the dictatorship, committing to writing the human costs of the war, without ever falling prey to the rhetoric of a 'just' war.

Il vecchio con gli stivali (56) tells the story of Aldo Piscitello, a town hall clerk who is the very antithesis of the Fascist myth of virility and strength: his surname itself is a diminutive ('little fish'), and the description of him as 'uno di quegli uomini piccini dei quali si apprende senza meraviglia che sono padri di ragazzi alti e ben fatti' (p. 113) points not only to this diminutiveness, but also suggests potential cuckoldry. Piscitello is indif-

ferent to insults and the summer heat - a fact which causes the narrator to cast doubt on whether or not he has blood running in his veins - while his most noteworthy habit is his 'sbadigliarella nervosa' (p. 114). The story tells how, in 1930, this apolitical man is faced with the choice of either joining the Fascist party or losing his job, and how he chooses the former option, persuaded by his wife, who subsequently arranges for the records to show that he has been a party member since 1921 and, as a squadrista, is entitled to a bonus (p. 120). Piscitello gradually falls prey to an ever-increasing disgust for Fascism and for his own acquiescence: this feeling, however, never matures into true opposition to the regime, and cannot prevent him from losing his job in the post-war anti-Fascist purges.

In the story of Aldo Piscitello, Brancati provides not only a satirical portrait of aspects of Fascism, but also an account of the oppression by power of an individual incapable of rational opposition. The protagonist's protest against the regime begins with the secret abuse of the lapel badge he is forced to wear (p. 121) and continues in the political ceremonies he is obliged to attend, during which he circulates among the authorities mentally insulting them (p. 123), or enjoying the ridiculous spectacle of fat, old men squeezed in an undignified manner into military uniforms (pp. 125-6). The silent and contained nature of this protest is dictated by pragmatism, but it is also true that the hate of which it is an expression is an emotion which defies rational formulation, being described as '*il più forsennato e cieco odio*' (p. 122; my italics). When, at the zenith of

the dictatorship's fortunes, he is invited by his wife to justify his hatred of Fascism, Piscitello becomes confused and can only blurt out his complaints about the most banal of the regime's impositions, while he remains unaware of the fact that his fundamental objection is to the loss of liberty (p. 127). Brancati-narrator refers explicitly to the humanist tradition of reason when he asks, perhaps ironically,

Perché un canto di Milton o di Leopardi sulla libertà, o il libro di un filosofo proibito non volò in soccorso di questo poveruomo, tradito da tutte le sofferenze che un'anima onesta può ricevere dall'oppressione, e tuttavia incapace di dire perché soffrisse? (p. 128)

The suggestion that such help would enable Piscitello to express his instinctive feeling that 'reason' is on his side reveals the author's adherence to the traditional view that liberal humanist literature is the expression by particularly sensitive individuals of absolute and universal values.

Brancati seems to imply that, without the sustenance of this type of reason, Piscitello is condemned never to be able to express his anger, which remains in his mind and in his blood as 'parole di protesta, dispetto, insofferenza, noia' (p. 141). After the fall of Fascism, devoid of reason and deprived of the hate which had brought him to the brink of a rational protest, Piscitello is reduced almost to the state of an inanimate object, 'un essere poco poco più animato della sedia che quell'essere stesso aveva occupato per quarant'anni... davanti a un tavolo del Municipio' (p. 146). Brancati's writings could be seen as an attempt to

express his generation's frustrated protest.

While eulogizing liberal humanist reason, Brancati points to another form of reasoning, namely that of the protagonist's wife, whose appeal to her husband to accept the consensus of opinion regarding Fascism is twice referred to as 'ragionare' (p. 118). This is a further example of how the theme of the ambiguity of reason recurs in the works of the three authors discussed, and it is interesting to note that here, as elsewhere, the strength of the ideology of reason allows Brancati to cast doubt on one kind of reasoning, which, after all, is a pragmatism largely dictated by the situation, without questioning the concept of another, absolute reason. As I have already mentioned above, Brancati considered this kind of submission to the consensus one of the most alarming characteristics of stupidity. It is worth noting that Rosina achieves her aim by exploiting her husband's fear of the representatives of power - 'Papa, Imperatori, Re, Dittatori, Ministri, Generali' (p. 118) - combined with her exhortation to put into action the antithesis of the author's ideal reason.

In La noia del '937 (now in Il vecchio con gli stivali, pp. 181-90), on the other hand, Brancati demonstrates an awareness of the dangers facing reason, should it become merely an exasperated form of introspection. The noia to which the author refers was the reaction of a minority to a society in which reason was suppressed: the young knew no society other than the one in which they lived, while the old 'erano creduti soltanto quando non credevano più ai loro ideali'; women are portrayed as passive creatures, incapable

of rational thought, who help sustain the irrational illusion of a contented society:

Le casalinghe [erano] contente che i loro mariti non fossero distratti dalla politica, le corrotte che i loro amanti non fossero indeboliti dal pensiero o resi freddi dagli ideali. (p. 181)

Brancati's choice of words provides a clear example of the irrational role attributed to women by the reason of patriarchal society, emphasizing the ideological nature of 'absolute' reason.

As an antidote to the complacent conformismo which makes these people 'contenti di vivere nel proprio tempo', Brancati evokes 'una risata dei vecchi tempi', such as that described by Pirandello in the short story, C'è qualcuno che ride, referred to above: it is interesting to note that, although he never openly distanced himself from the regime, Pirandello's reaction to the conformismo portrayed in this racconto was similar to that which Brancati later outlined in 'Appunti sul comico' (1952).

Domenico Vannantò, the protagonist of Brancati's story, is presented as potentially an active rational hero: if he had lived in the eighteenth century, the reader is told, he would have been 'un pensatore' and an encyclopaedist; in the nineteenth century, a poet fighting for Greek independence; but, living as he did in Fascist Italy, a contemporary of the author, 'faceva l'unica cosa nobile che potesse fare un uomo come lui: si annoiava' (p. 183). It is possible to see in this reaction an exasperated introspection which, in the case of the protagonist, is the result of his meditations as a child on the mystery of the universe (pp. 183-4). It is an

introspection which is impotent and self-consuming, and, confronted by the arrogance of power, culminates in suicide (p. 190).

Il vecchio con gli stivali e altri racconti - the collection of stories written by Brancati between 1935 and 1946, the year in which the volume was published - contains a number of stories in which Brancati describes the horrors of the war. Typically enough of Brancati's writing, the episodes described involve neither the 'heroes' of the war, nor their actions, but rather the victims of these, and their reactions. La casa felice (1944), La doccia, Il cavaliere and La ragazza e la cimice (1945), Storia di un uomo che per due volte non rise and Sebastiana (1946) all describe such victims, whose reactions to the violence they have suffered at the hands of 'power' are frequently at, or beyond, the margins of the rational.

It will be sufficient, as an example of these, to examine the short story, La doccia (Il vecchio con gli stivali, pp. 214-19), in which Brancati describes the psychological trauma experienced during the war by Giuseppe Gandolfo, whose obsession with cleanliness and twice-daily showers, in 1935, had exasperated his uncle with whom he lived, but who, on his return from Tuscany in 1943, sought consolation in abject filth for the inhumanity he had witnessed. Deprived of the strength necessary to enjoy the solitude of his own company (and in this one can see a symbol of his inability to exercise his individual reason), Giuseppe is reduced to an animal-like state and 'finiva sempre coll'imbrancarsi in gruppi numerosi' (p. 215). Only the knowledge that, beneath

his clean and elegant clothes, he, himself, is dirty and lice-infested renders his participation in society tolerable. This subversion of bourgeois society, from which he derives a perverse pleasure, seems the only possible reaction left to him after the realization that this same society, notwithstanding its claims to a foundation in reason, is capable of producing the sort of brutality he had observed in the cold-blooded murder of two women and two little girls by soldiers armed with axes. The equation of physical cleanliness with the more abstract values of this society, and the way in which Giuseppe's rejection of the former is the result of the crisis he experiences as regards the latter, can be seen in the description of how his resolve falters when he first discovers the bugs in his bed:

Stava quasi per ribellarsi, per chiedere acqua, sapone, luce, amore, felicità, dignità... ma non fu che un momento: di nuovo il sorriso amaro gli apparve sulla bocca, di nuovo l'occhio gli si velò, di nuovo l'animo spaurito cercò bramosamente il conforto che gli mandava, attraverso i pori di tutta la pelle, la sozzura. (p. 217; my italics)

Finally, however, he gives vent to his disgust by accusing himself of the crime he had witnessed and by assuming responsibility for it, an action not without significance in Christian symbolism (pp. 218-19) (57).

The years immediately after the war were characterized in Italy, and indeed in Europe generally, by a renewal of political activity, made possible by the defeat of the Nazi-Fascist dictatorships, and accompanied by a polarization of political positions. On 2 June 1946, the Italian people were called on to vote freely for the first time in more than two

decades, in the elections for the Constituent Assembly and the referendum which saw the defeat of the monarchists and the triumph of the republican cause. The following year saw the beginning of the Cold War, with the world divided into two blocs, and political choice frequently over-simplified as that of allegiance to one or other of these.

Brancati made his contribution to the political debate of these years in a series of articles, some of which I have already had cause to refer to above (58). The content of these articles was basically an appeal to reject conformismo which, given the fact that Nazism and Italian Fascism had both been defeated, implied a rejection of communism. Brancati justified his stand by pointing to his own crimes against culture in the name of Fascism, the memory of which, he claimed, warned him of the dangers of committing the same sins in the name of communism:

Un po' di modestia, davanti ai grandi principi di libertà che hanno formato la nostra cultura, si addice a noi peccatori che già una volta abbiamo rinnegato quei principi. (Diario romano, p. 38 (February 1947))

Brancati's was clearly an appeal to the values of liberal humanism, and the influence of Croce, the prophet of Italian liberal humanism, was evident in his inability to recognize that Fascism, too, had been a product of the liberal culture which he now eulogized. The author attributed a universal value to his own definition of liberty as freedom of thought and expression, calling the latter 'la sola degna di questo nome', and, in this flood of humanist rhetoric, even went so far as to suggest that the only science and art worth saving were those inspired 'nel senso della verità e della

bellezza' (Diario romano, p. 10 (January 1947)). As in his comments on 'buon senso', Brancati revealed here how, like many other writers, he was working within a framework of definite, but undefined, assumptions, and how he was frequently unconscious of the subjective nature of this framework. This would not, perhaps, be worthy of remark, were it not for the fact that, in his comments, the author so constantly referred to the partiality of other libertà, other verità, and other forms of giustizia, but, given the self-justifying nature of the reason on which Brancati's principles were based, he failed to apply his policy of doubt to his own principles. (This incoherence spills over into his fiction, as will be demonstrated below in the discussion of Il bell'Antonio.)

In the same way that he appealed for his ideal of liberty to be respected at all costs, he also called for politicians to conduct their activities according to an equally undefined 'moralismo', which he contrasted to 'machiavellismo' (Diario romano, pp. 8-9 (January 1947)). In a passage later echoed by Sciascia, Brancati acknowledged the idealistic nature of his approach to politics:

So di giudicare la politica da moralista, cioè secondo regole che non sono le sue. E' uno sbaglio del quale sono felice, perché le regole che applico alla politica sono quelle di un'attività che di gran lunga la sorpassa. (59)

At the same time, he recognized the isolation to which such an attitude destined him, revelling in the sense of superiority this afforded him: 'Comprendere certe cose dall'interno è lo stesso che praticarle... Non ci resta che comprendere dall'alto o, come dicono i teorici dei regimi

totalitari, dal di fuori'.

In the articles referred to here, Brancati expressed his nostalgia for a golden age of tolerance, individualism and liberty which he felt had come to an end with the nineteenth century. He condemned his own century as one in which almost everyone is a conformist, and claimed that the passage between the two centuries had been marked by an abrupt transition 'dall'amore per la libertà all'amore per la servitù' (60). Horkheimer, in the work referred to above, described twentieth-century society in a similar way, but perceived the responsibility of what he termed as 'subjective reason' in the creation of this 'situazione di razionalità irrazionale':

In questa era della ragione formalizzata le dottrine si susseguono così rapidamente che ciascuna è considerata solo come un'altra ideologia fra le tante, eppure ciascuna viene invocata, per un certo periodo, per giustificare l'oppressione e la discriminazione. (Eclisse della ragione, p. 81)

Brancati's rejection of dogma - apart, that is, from the dogma of obeying individual reason - resulted, inevitably, in his isolation.

Of Brancati's better-known longer fiction, it is Il bell'Antonio (1949) which deals most explicitly with the themes of power and reason, and in which there is the most direct comparison of gallismo and Fascism. Sciascia compared Brancati's novel to Stendhal's Armance, ou quelques scènes d'un salon de Paris en 1827 (1827), not only because of the sexual impotence which afflicts the protagonists of the two works, but because of the relationship between the case of

impotence and the reactionary reign of Charles X in Stendhal, and the years of fascism in Brancati (61). In Il bell'Antonio, Brancati points to the ambiguity of the discourse of reason, and portrays a society in which the latter is subordinated to the values of power, whether it be political or sexual power, or indeed power as represented by material interests. It is these two aspects which make this novel particularly important to the present discussion, and which will be discussed in detail here (62).

Political power and sexuality are closely connected throughout the novel. Antonio's tenuous political influence is directly related to his supposed sexual prowess, so that the phrase, 'E' un giovane potente!' (p. 79), is doubly significant, while the news of his impotence signals the end of his credit in Rome (p. 243). Typically enough for a patriarchal power system, when it is necessary to re-establish a hierarchy and to dismiss any doubt regarding the Fascist Vice-Secretary's superiority, a comparison is made between his robustness and Antonio's delicate physique, and Antonio is humiliated by the implication that his appearance is not sufficiently masculine: '"Non vi si può scambiare per una donna!" disse untuosamente Lorenzo Calderara [al vice-segretario]' (p. 39).

The identification of political power and virility creates grotesque situations: Edoardo Lentini's confused act of rebellion against the regime, for example, consists of his making insulting remarks about Hitler, accusing him of being sexually impotent (pp. 228-30). It is maliciously suggested in Brancati's Catania that the interest of the

members of the antifascist circle in questions of philosophy and liberty disguises their sexual inadequacy, and the themes of power and reason are placed in direct opposition: "Se fossero in potere di dar sazio alle loro mogli, non alleverebbero tante sciocchezze nel cervello" (p. 277; my italics). Time after time, Antonio refuses to apply his mind to moral or philosophical problems (p. 175; p. 254; p. 277), or even to think of the consequences of the war (p. 247): indeed, we learn early on that 'le strade della sua intelligenza' (p. 51) are blocked by the obsession which is only revealed later. This obsession is criticized by Edoardo, who invites his friend to contemplate what he might have achieved, had he not wasted his life closed in one all-consuming thought, and accuses him of having made virility his religion (pp. 322-3): however, Edoardo vents his own frustration and humiliation with the rape of the porter's daughter - an inferior in terms of both class and gender - which is clearly a means of reasserting his dominion after his own imprisonment by the Allied forces (pp. 324-5).

Brancati implies a parallel between Antonio's case and the merely superficial bellicosity of the regime, as represented by 'quelle divise nere d'ispettori nelle quali da anni, per prudenza, vanità e interesse, s'erano cacciati tanti poveri borghesi' who, with the approach of war, find themselves being expected to live up to their posturing (p. 228).

Antonio's uncle, Ermenegildo Fasanaro, reveals the contradictions inherent in his vague bourgeois liberalism, which allows him to lament the demise of liberty while

conceding the value of dictatorships in controlling the masses, to recognize the injustice of private property while refusing to consider any fairer division of wealth (pp. 22-5). Edoardo suppresses his disgust for the Fascist regime and through incoherent reasoning and false syllogisms justifies his desire to become 'podestà' (pp. 50-1). The Duca di Bronte is described as a typical example of the type of bourgeois conformist that represents the greatest threat to democracy and the greatest asset to the established powers: indeed, it is inconceivable to him

che una persona, pensando con una sola testa, disapprovasse quello che approvavano i Ministri, i Prefetti, i Comandanti di Corpo d'Armata, i Presidenti di Tribunali, i Maggiori dei Carabinieri, il Re, i Cardinali, i Vescovi e tutti coloro che non hanno bisogno di far debiti per mantenere se stessi e i loro figli. (p. 261; my italics)

In this list, Brancati assembles representatives of political, military and religious power, uniting them with those who share in the exercise of power by virtue of their economic well-being against the individual whose only means of opposing this power is by use of reason.

The terminology of reason is displayed in Il bell'Antonio in all its ambiguity. The author reveals his taste for farce in his description of the conversation of Antonio's disconsolate friends, who feel that their honour has been tarnished by his impotence:

'Ah, così ragioni tu?'

'Così ragiono io. E se c'è qualcuno, che non gli piace come ragiono io, se ne vada... prima che io gli rompa le corna con qualche piede di tavolino!' (p. 227) (63)

Edoardo's rebellion, in which he limits himself to insulting

Hitler by refusing to consider him on the same plane as the Duce, leads him to self-doubt and an apparently banal paradox - "'E' giusto che si debba mentire per dire la verità?"' (p. 232) - in which, however, it is possible to detect Brancati's perception of the vagueness of such terms as 'giusto', 'mentire' and 'verità'. Antonio himself chooses the version of 'verità' about Barbara's war-time fate which corresponds most closely to his ideal image of her (p. 309).

The same terms and the same vagueness are present in the words of Padre Raffaele, Antonio's mother's confessor, when he tries to explain to her the position of the Church as regards her son's marriage: "'La Chiesa è per la verità e la giustizia"' (p. 144). The fact is that the Church, by annulling Antonio and Barbara's marriage in observance of the criteria of 'truth' and 'justice', acquiesces in the Puglisi family's scheme to remarry Barbara to the wealthy Duca di Bronte, demonstrating how the 'absolute' terms of reason are, in fact, inscribed in the discourse of power, represented in this instance by economic interests. Padre Raffaele unconsciously expresses frustration at the inability of reason to voice anything other than the arguments of power: "'Se dovessi ascoltare il mio sentimento, e non il mio giudizio, quella ragazza... in chiesa non la farei entrare nemmeno morta!"' (p. 145), he says of Barbara, whom he describes as possessing 'un'anima ben comoda', governed by a strong sense of 'utilità propria' (p. 146). The young priest's judgement, however, is itself susceptible to other influences, confused as it is with his own vaguely sexual attraction to Barbara, and, indeed, 'egli non sapeva più se

il suo fosse un giudizio severo o un modo di vagheggiarla' (p. 157).

Brancati himself was not entirely immune - even in this late work, in which he demonstrates his perception of its ambiguity - from the uncritical use of the discourse of reason. The socialist lawyer Raimondo Bonaccorsi dominates the anti-fascist salon with 'una saggezza vecchio stile' and comments which create the feeling that

oltre le facili e chiare ragioni dei suoi amici impazienti, ce n'erano altre, al di là dei giornali e dei libri che essi avevano letti, in giornali più antichi e libri assai rari, in punti estremamente lontani della cultura che egli solo riusciva ad abbracciare con la mente. (p. 235)

One cannot exclude the possibility that this description was intended ironically, but it seems more likely that Brancati was referring here to an ideal kind of humanism which, in his liberal faith, he associated with the nineteenth century. Bonaccorsi rejects Edoardo Lentini's suggestion that there is no good to be found among the Fascists, and refers to a time in which political passion still permitted one to recognize the positive qualities of one's adversaries, and when Edoardo repeats his comment, adding that the Fascists do not merit consideration as adversaries, Bonaccorsi reproaches him with the lapidary observation, "'Perché lei rimane sempre un fascista!'" (p. 239).

This conflict between the awareness of the ambivalence and limitations of reason and the desire to use it as an instrument to arrive at an absolute truth is represented in the meditations of Antonio's uncle, Ermenegildo, who challenges the rationalism of the Sicilian philosopher, Giovanni

Gentile (1875-1944), to whom he refers simply as 'il nostro grande filosofo vivente' (pp. 280-2) and whose concept of 'l'atto presente' he summarises and simplifies as 'al di fuori del pensiero umano non esiste realtà di sorta' (p. 280). Ermenegildo is obliged to couch his objection to a philosophy which renders impossible the traditional aspiration to 'la verità assoluta' in the language of reason, and falls into paradox and self-contradiction:

'Non c'è che dire, ha ragione lui... Però, sento qualcosa in fondo al petto... una pazzia, qualcosa che chiede giustizia contro questo modo di ragionare che non ti dà respiro... Che il vero e il fatto siano la stessa cosa... mi ha sempre convinto, ma non ci ho mai creduto... Voglio dire che un paio di maniche è rimaner convinti di un ragionamento e un altro paio credere che sia vero'.
(pp. 280-1)

He longs for the advent of an even greater philosopher who will demonstrate, 'con parole belle come il sole', that the world exists outside thought and that the latter merely reflects it, but he fails to recognize that the 'illuminated words' which he hopes will define the absolute truth, themselves have no absolute value and can only produce other thoughts (pp. 280-1). Ermenegildo's dissatisfaction with '"una rassegnata filosofia che si accontenta di chiamare verità le nostre disgraziate domande senza risposta"' (p. 287) leads him to the conclusion that sooner or later he will turn to one of the two current religions which offer him an absolute truth, communism or Catholicism (p. 290). In the end, given his inability to reconcile the attractions of rational doubt and religious faith, he chooses instead to take his life, leaving a note which reflects his unresolved desire to explain life in terms of reason: '"Quest'incubo

della vita è stato potente e continuo e, pur tra le sue
assurdità, ha saputo avere un'aria di coerenza e quasi di
naturalezza"' (p. 294). Brancati, too, like De Roberto
before him and Sciascia after him, preferred the truth con-
tained in questions without answers to the truths promised
by religious faith, but continued to express doubt as to the
absolute value of reason.

NOTES

- (1) Fedor; poema drammatico, Catania, 1928; Everest; mito in un atto, Catania, 1931; L'amico del vincitore, Milan, 1932; Piave; dramma in quattro atti, Milan, 1932. The author parodies his own youthful dannunzianesimo in the short story, Singolare avventura di Francesco Maria, 1941, now in Il vecchio con gli stivali e altri racconti, new edition, Milan, 1981, pp. 147-80: this edition is hereafter referred to as Il vecchio con gli stivali.
- (2) Ugo D'Andrea, 'Fra libri e riviste', Critica fascista (1 July 1931), p. 259.
- (3) Luigia Abrugiati, Il primo tempo di Vitaliano Brancati, Lanciano, 1977: see the chapter on 'La componente politica', pp. 115-34 (p. 116).
- (4) Leonardo Sciascia, 'Un romanzo "fascista" di Brancati', Profondo sud, I, no. 1 (1984), 16-17 (p. 17); see, too, the pages dedicated to this novel by Giuseppe Amoroso in his monograph, Vitaliano Brancati, Florence, 1978, pp. 19-27.
- (5) 'Istinto e intuizione', in I fascisti invecchiano, Milan, 1946, pp. 49-66 (p. 55). The works of the Sicilian writer, Giuseppe Antonio Borgese (1882-1952) would make an interesting subject for a future study.
- (6) Brancati's crisis was not provoked by a particular public event (as, for example, in the case of his contemporary, Elio Vittorini (1908-1966), whose rejection of Fascism was largely a consequence of the regime's participation in the Spanish Civil War), but was more a personal reaction to the ever-increasing impositions of the regime on the life and thinking of the individual.
- (7) Diario romano, edited by S. De Feo and G. A. Cibotto, new edition with a preface by Leonardo Sciascia, Milan, 1984, p. 235 (April 1950).
- (8) Arrivo in città, La Stampa (9 January 1933), now in Sogno di un valzer e altri racconti, edited by Enzo Siciliano, with notes by Rita Verdirame, Milan, 1982, pp. 161-5. This edition is hereafter referred to as Sogno di un valzer.
- (9) First published with the title, Il tempo vola, Totalità, 2 (1933): republished with the new title and other, negligible variations in Il Popolo di Roma (24 August 1941), now in Sogno di un valzer, pp. 166-70.
- (10) 'I nomignoli', in I fascisti invecchiano, pp. 93-102 (pp. 97, 99).
- (11) See, for example, Raffaele La Sala, 'Rassegna di studi critici sulla narrativa di Vitaliano Brancati', Critica letteraria, 4 (1976), 165-74 (p. 166).

(12) Singolare avventura di viaggio, in Opere. 1932-1946, edited by Leonardo Sciascia, Milan, 1987, pp. 5-85 (p. 37).

(13) Canto di negri, Pan (1 February 1934), now in Sogno di un valzer, pp. 187-202.

(14) Stagione calma, La Stampa (17 September 1934), now in In cerca di un sì, Catania, 1939, pp. 7-12.

(15) La morte di Stalin (1958), in Gli zii di Sicilia, eighth edition 'Nuovi Coralli', Turin, 1980, pp. 68 and 82.

(16) 'Argomento preferito', Il Popolo di Roma (8 May 1941), now in Il borghese e l'immensità; Scritti 1930/1954, edited by S. De Feo and G. A. Cibotto, Milan, 1973, pp. 112-17.

(17) 'Appunti sul comico', Corriere della sera (31 October 1952), now in Il borghese e l'immensità, pp. 376-81 (p. 377).

(18) 'Appunti sul comico', p. 376. See also the short story, La noia del '937 (1944), analysed below. It would be interesting, at a later date, to make a detailed comparison between the nature and function of Brancati's umorismo and that of Pirandello, with reference to the latter's narrative and to his essay, L'umorismo (1908; 1920): let it suffice here to draw attention to Pirandello's story, C'è qualcuno che ride (1934), now in Novelle per un anno, fourteenth edition, 2 vols, Milan, 1986, II, 824-8), in which the laughter seems to fulfil precisely the function defined here by Brancati.

(19) 'Appunti sul comico', p. 378. See my article, 'I piaceri del dissenso: Brancati and the spirit of illuminismo', Bulletin of the Society for Italian Studies, no. 17 (November 1984), 49-58.

(20) 'Appunti sul comico', p. 378. Brancati, without doubt, remembered the words he himself had used some twenty years earlier to describe his impressions on meeting Mussolini for the first time:

Sotto quella semplicità d'uomo moderno, un'altra semplicità si nasconde. E' la liscia nettezza della personalità eccezionale e potente; l'esterno dell'uomo che non sarà mai dominato...

Io sono nato in un'epoca d'asfissia.

Ricordo che non c'era nulla da fare; che sedevo, bambino, in un mondo ove tutto pareva finito; e il dubbio di vivere era così grande da togliere anche il pensiero della morte.

Egli, l'uomo che ho visto pochi minuti fa, apparve come un nuovo senso della vita.

Io non so bene chi egli sia e non lo giudico storicamente, anche perché la sua opera non è compiuta... Ma egli è certamente un senso della vita; e in lui parla qualcosa che mi fa trasalire.

Dall'essermi accertato alla sua figura fisica, m'è rimasto un grande rombo, nella memoria; come di sorgente. ('La mia

visita a Mussolini', Critica fascista, IX, no. 15 (1 August 1931), 292-3 (p. 293))

(21) Compare the feeling symbolized for Sciascia by Goya's engraving 'El sueño de la razon produce monstruos', described in the following chapter: Brancati, like Sciascia after him, set out to denounce the irrational nature of the society in which he lived, visible to whoever was capable of observing the people around him with lucidity.

(22) Mario e il mago, translated by Giorgio Zampa, 1955; Milan, 1988, p. 51.

(23) Diario romano, pp. 55-7 (March 1947); p. 363 (March 1953). Incidentally, Mann's daughter, Elizabeth, was the second wife of the Sicilian author and critic, Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, whose importance for Brancati has been commented on above.

(24) Max Horkheimer, Eclisse della ragione (1947), translated by Elena Vaccari Spagnol, Turin, 1969, p. 105.

(25) Gli anni perduti, second edition 'Oscar Mondadori', Milan, 1976, p. 5; my italics.

(26) pp. 146-7. See Brancati's condemnation of Pirandello's plays as 'queste false profondità' (letter to Francesco Guglielmino, Rome, 9 February 1942: E. Scuderi, 'Un carteggio inedito di Brancati', Le ragioni critiche, I (July 1971), now in E. Scuderi, Questioni di letteratura moderna e contemporanea, Catania, 1974, pp. 137-43 (p. 142)).

(27) See 'Il castello', Omnibus (7 May 1938), now in Il borghese e l'immensità, pp. 88-92 (p. 91). Brancati later described the amusement to be obtained from the 'common sense' observation of 'gli edifici che si levano pomposamente al di sopra del medio, portando sino alle stelle il senso del piccolo e del meschino' ('I piaceri del buon senso' (1943), in I piaceri; Parole all'orecchio, new edition, Milan, 1980, pp. 43-7 (p. 43)).

(28) Brancati's characters in this and other works, with, for example, their prolonged dependence on their mothers and their obsessive quest for warmth, frequently seem to lend themselves to a Freudian interpretation.

(29) Sebastiano Franci, 'Della precauzione contro le opinioni', Il Caffé, II, xxv, 197-202 (p. 197). The Enlightenment idea can be traced back, in turn, to Plato's distinction between knowledge which is explainable by 'reasoning' (logismos), and opinion or belief (doxa): see Cottingham, Rationalism, pp. 13-16.

(30) 'I "contenti di vivere nel proprio tempo"', Il Tempo (4 August 1946), now in Il borghese e l'immensità, pp. 155-6. Note also Pirandello's judgement on the 'pigrizia mentale' of the Italians, which passes for tolerance: 'Il popolo italiano non vuol darsi la pena di pensare: commette a pochi l'incarico di pensare per lui' (Il guardaroba

dell'eloquenza (1928), in Novelle per un anno, II, 395-415 (p. 398)). In spite of his much-discussed support of Fascism, the tone of Pirandello's works frequently implied a critical attitude towards the regime: see also note (18) above on C'è qualcuno che ride.

(31) Pietro Verri, 'I giudizi popolari', Il Caffé, I, xxi, 161-5 (p. 163).

(32) 'I piaceri del conformismo', Il Tempo (23 July 1946), now in Il borghese e l'immensità, pp. 152-4 (p. 153).

(33) 'I piaceri della stupidità', Il Tempo (24 February 1948), now in Il borghese e l'immensità, pp. 240-3 (p. 241).

(34) pp. 142-3. Compare this to the optimism of Everest, in which the symbolic 'donna incinta' is described as 'serena e bella, come se nel grembo portasse un figlio del sole' (p. 19). The theme of apprensione seen here is further developed in Il bell'Antonio (1949) and Paolo il caldo (1954): for an analysis of this theme in the latter, see Paolo Fabbri and Gianfranco Marrone, 'La luce del Sud. Appunti semiotici', Nuove Effemeridi, 2, no. 8 (1989), 62-73.

(35) pp. 149-50. Note 'i vivi e i morti' and Borgese's novel of the same title published in 1923.

(36) 'Vitaliano Brancati: la vita, i libri', in Diario romano, pp. 389-96 (p. 393).

(37) Il sogno di Lucia, Omnibus (7 August 1937), now in In cerca di un sì, pp. 95-103.

(38) Un matrimonio disapprovato, in In cerca di un sì, pp. 107-24 (p. 107).

(39) See Brian Moloney, 'Politics and the novel in Mussolini's Italy', in Literature and Western Civilization, edited by D. Daiches and A. Thorlby, London, 1972-, VI, pp. 295-314.

(40) Il bacio, Omnibus (14 May 1938), now in Il vecchio con gli stivali, pp. 95-101.

(41) See, in particular, Everest, but also 'La mia visita a Mussolini' and Piave. The play Everest is an account of the efforts of a group of men to reach the summit of the mountain. They are drawn upwards and inspired to commit acts of great heroism by an immense and mysterious statue carved from the rock, which, when the leaves and branches partially obscuring it are cleared away, is recognized as the figure of Mussolini, whose fame and glory has survived two thousand years, though not to such an extent as to preserve this colossal altar from obscurity due to neglect: the young Fascist, Brancati, in his efforts to pay tribute to the power of the Duce, unintentionally echoes Shelley's poem 'Ozymandias', with its comment on the lability of power and fortune.

(42) The character reappears with the name Giuseppe, in an explicitly Fascist context, in the play Raffaele (1948).

(43) Confusione in montagna, Il Resto del Carlino (28 March 1938); now in Sogno di un valzer, pp. 214-19.

(44) Sogno di un valzer, Quadrivio, 6 June-14 August 1938, now in Sogno di un valzer, pp. 5-69.

(45) Paolo Mario Sipala, Vitaliano Brancati: introduzione e guida allo studio dell'opera brancatiana; storia e antologia della critica, Florence, 1978, pp. 54-5.

(46) 'Gli amici di Nissa', Omnibus (5 March 1938), now in Il borghese e l'immensità, pp. 81-4 (p. 82).

(47) 'Sulla stupidità', now in R. Musil, Sulla stupidità e altri scritti, translated by Andrea Casalegno and with an introduction by Roberto Olmi, Milan, 1986, pp. 234-62 (p. 259).

(48) Sogno di un valzer, p. 13. Compare this relationship to that of Chance the gardener and the outside world in Jerzy Kosinsky's Being there (1971), analysed in the light of Musil's essay in Gianfranco Marrone, Stupidità e scrittura, Palermo, 1990, pp. 39-57: 'Se lui... non capisce, gli altri, a loro volta, non capiscono che lui non capisce e sono costretti a cercare un senso, sia pure improbabile, recondito, allegorico alle sue affermazioni' (Marrone, p. 46); 'La stupidità solare si presenta agli occhi degli stupidi intelligenti come prontezza di spirito, acutezza d'ingegno, essenzialità, precisione, senso pratico, saggezza, sapienza, come, insomma assoluta intelligenza' (p. 47). Kosinsky's novel does not reflect on stupidity in a totalitarian state, but is set in the United States, 'the land of the free'.

(49) Brancati shared with Gogol the taste for the grotesque and for social satire, and his admiration for the Russian writer emerges from comments in the Diario romano (p. 207, pp. 290-4, p. 339). Apart from this direct reference in Un uomo di fede, there are other occasions in which Brancati paid tribute to Gogol in his writings. The title of L'ispezione, written in 1938, and now in Il vecchio con gli stivali, is reminiscent of that of Gogol's play, The Inspector (1835, 1842). The influence of Gogol is visible, perhaps, in Gli anni perduti: compare, for example, the account of Chichikov's arrival in the town of N in the opening pages of Dead Souls (1842) and the description of Buscaino's arrival in Nataca at the beginning of the second part of Brancati's novel; and a comparison could be made between the two characters and their enterprises. Compare, too, the sexual connotations of the ugly man's obsession with his nose in Confusione in montagna, and of Kovalov's loss in Gogol's The Nose (1836). Various critics, including Sciascia and Calvino, have hinted at Brancati's affinity to Gogol: see, in particular, Gabriele Catalano, 'Vitaliano Brancati (a proposito di alcune opinioni correnti tra i suoi critici)', Critica letteraria, 8 (1980), 34-63. Sipala's

bibliography refers to an article - R. Tavernier, 'Brancati, un Gogol italiano', Preuves (January 1960) - which, however, I have been unable to trace.

(50) Denis Mack Smith, Mussolini (1981), St. Alban's, 1983.

(51) Leonardo Sciascia, La scomparsa di Majorana, Turin, 1975, pp. 8-9.

(52) Don Giovanni in Sicilia, Milan, 1976, pp. 4-5.

(53) 'Piaceri del "gallismo"', Il Tempo (12 July 1946), now in Il borghese e l'immensità, pp. 148-51.

(54) Catherine Belsey discusses Louis Althusser's conception of the ideological nature of common sense in the first chapter of her book, Critical Practice, 'Criticism and common sense', pp. 1-36.

(55) 'Argomento preferito', Il Popolo di Roma (8 May 1941), now in Il borghese e l'immensità, pp. 112-17. 'I piaceri della maldicenza', in I piaceri, pp. 75-81.

(56) In Aretusa, 1, no. 3 (1944), 21-48, now in Il vecchio con gli stivali e altri racconti (1946), Milan, 1981, pp. 113-46.

(57) Sciascia referred to this story in his comment on how it seemed to him that the hippie generation, with its rejection of the conventions of bourgeois society, was attempting to expiate that society's crimes (Nero su nero, pp. 28-9).

(58) 'I piaceri del conformismo', 'I "contenti di vivere nel proprio tempo"', 'Riperderemo il tempo perduto?', 'Non amo la mia epoca', 'Appunti sull'uomo d'ordine in Italia', all now in Il borghese e l'immensità; and the articles contained in the Diario romano.

(59) Diario romano, p. 41 (February 1947). Compare Sciascia's statement: 'Uno scrittore dovrebbe sempre poter dire che la politica di cui si occupa è etica. Sarebbe bello che potessero dirlo tutti. Ma che almeno lo dicano gli scrittori', Nero su nero, p. 69.

(60) 'Non amo la mia epoca', in Il borghese e l'immensità, pp. 163-5 (p. 164).

(61) Leonardo Sciascia, Stendhal e la Sicilia, Palermo, 1984, p. 38.

(62) Page references are to Il bell'Antonio, Milan, 1984.

(63) A further example can be found in the confrontation between Antonio's father, Alfio, and Padre Rosario, Barbara Puglisi's uncle, pp. 158-62. See the discussion in the following chapter of the way in which Sciascia paid tribute to this element of Brancati's writing, in La morte di Stalin

and L'onorevole, for example, and pointed in the same way to the ambiguity of the language of reason.

Chapter 4: Leonardo Sciascia.

Of the three writers examined here, it was Leonardo Sciascia who chose to write most frequently using the terminology of illuminismo, and this has led critics to describe the author unreservedly as a neo-illuminista (1). Certainly, there would seem to be strong evidence to support this definition, but we should, nonetheless, examine in detail the elements of his writing which have led to his being classified in this way, in order to understand Sciascia's use of such terms as 'reason', 'justice' and 'liberty', and to determine the validity of applying the label neo-illuminista to Sciascia.

Sciascia himself established the main critical approach to his writing when, in the introduction to what he was later to consider his first book (2), Le parrocchie di Regalpetra (1956), he presented his personal creed, unequivocally subscribing to the values of humanist-Enlightenment ideology discussed above: 'Credo nella ragione umana e nella giustizia e libertà che dalla ragione scaturiscono' (3). In subsequent editions (from 1967), the writer described his entire oeuvre (up to and including A ciascuno il suo (1966)) as an attempt to write a history of Sicily, offering, as an alternative to the 'official' history of the institutions of power, the account of 'una continua sconfitta della ragione' (pp. 6-7). The themes of reason, liberty and justice recur persistently in Sciascia's writings, and I intend to show what he meant by these terms, in an analysis of a number of the author's most significant works and of the political and cultural factors which determined their writing.

Leonardo Sciascia was born in the year in which Mussolini entered parliament and in which the fascist movement became the Partito Nazionale Fascista, the year before the 'March on Rome', and he grew up, therefore, in the fascist ventennio. The writer was later to state that he had described his own feelings and reactions of those years in Le parrocchie di Regalpetra and L'antimonio (1960) (4), a statement which allows one to see an element of autobiography in, for example, the 'Breve cronaca del regime' (Le parrocchie di Regalpetra, pp. 36-50), where the atmosphere described within the narrator's family is one of cynical acceptance and exploitation of the fascist regime. The first-person narrator's earliest impression of fascism is connected to the brutality and injustice of the murder of Matteotti (1924), while the narrator's father's 'fascism' is dictated, like that of Brancati's Aldo Piscitello and that of the narrator's father in Sciascia's short story La zia d'America (1958), by a mixture of fear and practical necessity, an inevitable aspect of any established dictatorship. By virtue of the author's hindsight ('Naturalmente, sto cercando di decifrare le confuse impressioni d'allora; quel che allora era soltanto dolore, smarrimento, ossessione', La Sicilia come metafora, p. 9), the narrator becomes conscious of the nature of fascism, of the society in which he lives and always has lived, and the 'non-fascist' feelings that develop in him stem from a feeling of disgust for fanaticism (p. 42), an awareness of the ridiculous aspects of the regime, and the recognition of local injustice. The narrator's attitude is not at first one

of open rebellion against the regime, but rather of dissatisfaction with it - akin to Sciascia's own initial feeling of 'insofferenza nei riguardi del fascismo' (5) - which makes him receptive to alternatives. The adolescent Sciascia-narrator (an identification possible perhaps to the same extent as that of Racalmuto-Regalpetra) reveals attitudes almost identical to those already encountered in some of Brancati's short stories, most particularly in Il bacio (1938) and Il vecchio con gli stivali (1944): a parallel can be drawn between the earlier of these two stories and the episode, described by Sciascia's narrator, of the boy who did not wash his face for a week after being kissed by Mussolini (p. 42), and between the feeling of disgust provoked in both Brancati and Sciascia by such fanaticism; the awareness of the narrator in Le parrocchie di Regalpetra of the ridiculous side of Fascism, as seen in the attempts to impose a martial character on an intrinsically unmartial society, echoes the more famous of Brancati's stories. His reaction to the Spanish Civil War is similar to Vittorini's sense of the 'mondo offeso', but in an earlier minor work, Favole della dittatura (1950), with its dual epigraphs from Leo Longanesi's anti-Fascist Parliamo dell'elefante (1947) and Orwell's anti-Stalinist 'fable', Animal Farm (1945), the author had assumed a position distant from that of Vittorini, who, like many of his contemporaries, after falling prey to the fascination of Fascism in his youth, had swung to embrace wholeheartedly the communist creed, before realizing that this doctrine, too, would make unreasonable demands on his individualistic

conscience. In Sciascia's rejection of dictatorships of both the Right and the Left it is possible to see a closer resemblance to the position of Brancati who, as has been seen, refused to repeat the errors of conforming to dogma that had marked his youthful adherence to Fascism. Indeed, in later years, asked to comment on his own relation to the character Calogero Schirò in the short story, La morte di Stalin (1958), Sciascia declared an affinity to Brancati, distancing himself, through his rejection of the communist creed, from the positions both of Calogero and of Vittorini (6), although, as will be shown below, he was prepared on other occasions to admit to a slight degree of identification with both of them (7).

At this point, it is possible to see in Sciascia's exaltation of reason a rejection, similar to that of Brancati, of the surrender of individuality which creates the conditions necessary for a dictatorship to flourish. As already suggested above, however, Sciascia went beyond Brancati's largely sterile portrayal of the nature of dictatorships, beyond his frustration at the injustice that befalls Aldo Piscitello in Il vecchio con gli stivali, beyond the horror of Giuseppe Gandolfo at the atrocities committed during the war (La doccia (1945)), beyond the impotent, silent protest of either of these two characters, who, to a great extent, represent Brancati's own reactions. Sciascia's reason was also the foundation of a concern about social injustice which was largely absent in Brancati's work, and it provided him, at least initially, with faith in the ability of reason to bring about justice.

Le parrocchie di Regalpetra is a protest against the injustice created by government without respect for the Enlightenment ideal of 'reason'. It is an attempt to 'ordinare razionalmente il conosciuto', to present a picture of the everyday oppression and injustice present in life in Regalpetra (which is and is not Racalmuto), against the background of mainstream history. In Le parrocchie di Regalpetra, Sciascia presented a theme which was to recur later and to assume ever-increasing importance in his writing: the incompatibility of official 'truth' and that of the writer. This is seen in the contrast between the two reports on the progress of his class during the school year that was coming to an end: one is the bureaucratic document presented to the headmaster, in which the system is protagonist, while the other is his own, personal, 'più vera cronaca' (p. 5; my italics), in which the writer shifts the focus of attention to the oppressed.

This incompatibility inevitably raises questions about the meaning of the terms of reference used by the author himself: reason, justice, liberty. 'Reason', or ragione, can be that of the writer, based on an enlightened ideal of altruism and respect for others, with its aspiration to a universal value, or it can be a synonym for the justification of self-interest, greed, order and injustice. 'Justice' can stand for an abstract concept based on 'reason', or it can be Justice as administered by men guided by ragioni proprie. 'Liberty' is perhaps the most ambiguous of the terms used, since it is almost impossible to provide a satisfactory definition of the difference between individual

liberty and the products of 'non-reason' listed above. Sciascia's initial stand was firmly in the camp of the Enlightenment tradition with its exaltation of individual reason, and if, on the one hand, he acknowledged the existence of an ideology of power which appropriated the language of reason to serve its own ends (and, as I shall show, he frequently exploited the resulting multiplicity and ambiguity of meaning of these terms for dramatic and ironic effect), on the other, it would seem that he failed at this point to recognize the implication that his ideals of reason, justice and liberty, the ideals of liberal humanism, were themselves, as defined by post-Saussurean linguistics, formalized elements of a socially constructed discourse, rather than the absolute and universal entities he presented them as (8).

In his note added to the 1967 edition of Le parrocchie di Regalpetra, Sciascia rejected the dual creeds of socialism (which in the Stalinist period had made irrational demands on the faith of its followers) and Christianity (which is presented in the form of the Inquisition). The two 'religions' are paralleled by their juxtaposition, by the association of Inquisizione and 'inquisizioni' (obviously referring to stalinist persecutions), and by their opposition to ragione, their part in its defeat and in the crushing of the oppressed (9).

The society portrayed by Sciascia in 'La storia di Regalpetra' (pp. 15-35) is one in which the values of liberal humanism are overturned and their meaning corrupted so that frequently they come to stand for their very

antithesis. Justice appears only in its 'official' form, as the 'ingiusta autorità' of the Del Carretto family (p. 16), as the fucilazioni carried out by the garibaldini to restore order (p. 24), as the institutionalized injustice of the post-Risorgimento government (p. 25), as that which took the side of the land-owners and the mafiosi whom they protected and who, in return, protected the interests of the rich (p. 28). It is this form of Justice which leads the people, by a form of 'rational' reading of the facts of life, to their own perversion of 'justice', to the conviction that 'solo la carabina faceva giustizia' (p. 29; cf. A ciascuno il suo, p. 102). Ironically, it was this attitude which encouraged the diffusion of the myth of the mafia as the champion of popular justice, and brought about a confusion between prepotenza and giustizia (p. 153). When the narrator describes the more recent history of Regalpetra, this antagonism between 'absolute' and arbitrary justice remains at the centre of the picture. Beside the description of the poverty that afflicts the town is the account of the clientelismo and indifference which prevents the fair distribution of aid (pp. 64-68). In contrast to the all too obvious inequality between the conditions of the narrator's pupils (pp. 93-122) and the galantuomini of the Circolo della Concordia (pp. 51-63), between the salinari and the proprietors of the saline (pp. 123-135), there is the formal equality in the eyes of the State in the obligation of military service (p. 51) and school attendance (p. 104), and in the imposition of taxes (p. 74): in this irrational society, the poor's exemption from the focatico is considered a privilege

against the injustice of which the rich rebel (10)!

Throughout Le parrocchie di Regalpetra there are examples of this corruption of values in their traditional sense. 'Concordia' stands for compromise (pp. 52-54); 'amicizia' becomes an all-powerful influence with grave social consequences (pp. 153-154); democracy itself assumes its basest form, that of 'un paradossale giuoco di combinazioni e di alleanze' (p. 73); the democratic platform becomes a showplace of sophistry, the electoral system, the seat of violence and coercion. The dual obsessions of property (pp. 19-20) and gallismo (pp. 55-58) are seen, as in the societies portrayed by De Roberto and Brancati, to assume a disproportionate importance. The very concept of reason is overturned, so that the only voice of dissent is attributed to the pazzo, Celestino (p. 40), with whom the narrator chooses implicitly to associate himself in this society of paradoxes when he states, 'l'unica mia difesa, qui, è il non essere d'accordo', in opposition to the 'concord' of the privileged set (p. 123): this theme of dissent as madness is recurrent in Sciascia's works and will be discussed in greater detail below.

Enlightenment motifs recur in Sciascia's lexical choices in his description of the irrational society of Regalpetra. The dissenter/madman says that until Mussolini is killed, 'non riusciremo a vedere un po' di luce' (p. 40; my italics); work in the sulphur mines is without light (p. 24) and entering the school, the very place which should be the seat of enlightenment, is like descending into the 'oscuere gallerie' of the zolfare (p. 93); in the salina, too, there

is a description of 'la deficiente illuminazione degli ambienti di lavoro' (p. 127). All these references to the lack of light are clearly allusions to the injustices caused by the disregard of rational criteria in governing society.

A further Enlightenment characteristic in Le parrocchie di Regalpetra is the writer's faith in the power of the pen, in the form of 'colpi di penna' in favour of the oppressed (pp. 11-12). In the face of misery, the writer's faith in the power of reason gives him hope in the possibility of change, although Sciascia does not really provide an answer to the question of how reason is to be activated against 'unreason', or reason in its various corrupt forms. At the same time, there is deep-rooted distrust among the oppressed themselves of the written word and of whoever manufactures it (p. 157), and this is traditional in the works of Sicilian writers from Verga to Sciascia, as the written word is seen principally as the arm of the authorities and of the rich: this ambivalence is dealt with more extensively below, in the analysis of those works in which it assumed a central role.

The history of Regalpetra is continued in a more purely fictional form in the short stories which make up Gli zii di Sicilia (1958; with L'antimonio, 1960) (11). The collective title is explained by the habit of calling zio whoever promises 'giustizia o vendetta' (La morte di Stalin, p. 79), and in this juxtaposition we see the corruption of the value of justice already encountered in Le parrocchie di Regalpetra (p. 29). Elsewhere, Sciascia explained that 'in Sicilia c'è sempre stata l'aspirazione a un mondo almeno più

giusto. Alcuni hanno risolto o hanno creduto di risolvere il problema con l'emigrazione, altri con l'esaltazione mitica di realtà lontane' (La Sicilia come metafora, p. 40), and the two images of zii and 'mythical realities' coincide to a great extent, while the question of what exactly is 'giusto' remains unanswered. The zii referred to are the popular myth of America as represented by the American aunt (12), faith in communism personified in the figure of lu zi' Peppi Stalin, and the hope placed in the 'revolution' brought by the earlier zi' Peppi Garibaldi: each of these, in the course of events, proves to be a vain hope. L'antimonio seems to promote a slightly more positive course, in that the narrator, by degrees of increased awareness, gradually comes to place his faith in reason, although, as I shall show, his enlightenment leads also to isolation.

In La zia d'America, the story is presented through the eyes of a child narrator, as in 'Breve cronaca del regime', which, in part, describes the same historical period. Sciascia seems to place greater distance between himself and the narrator of the short story by age-difference and by dramatizing the narrator as a sort of little monster whose innocence is partly corrupted by the horror and injustice witnessed in the war (pp. 12-13), which has become part of his childish games (13), and by the distorted values of the society in which he has been brought up. However, the narrator's gradual, but complete disillusionment with the myth of American materialism is comparable to Sciascia's own liberation, through his experiences in the post-war period, from the literary myth of America:

In quel periodo, anch'io ho modificato il mio sentimento riguardo all'America... L'America di Dos Passos, Steinbeck, Caldwell, Faulkner, ed Hemingway mi diventò l'America che sosteneva in Sicilia gli uomini peggiori, la peggiore politica. (La Sicilia come metafora, p. 26)

The narrator's confused awareness of the injustice of the political transformations which take place on the arrival of the American troops in his village is an indication of his fundamental innocence and a sense of justice the origin of which is unclear, but perhaps reflecting the humanist view of humanity as basically good: even his friend Filippo's father, the socialist carpenter, offers no rational explanation, but simply closes himself in his disgust (p. 16). Given the absence of a model of Enlightenment values in the society in which he lives, it would seem either that Sciascia felt justice to be a universal entity, existing outside a particular social formation (a traditional Enlightenment view), or that the narrator is, in some way, a projection back in time of the author's enlightened conscience.

The American officer's incomprehensible leniency with the captured bandits is attributed to his civilian job as a philosophy teacher: indeed, we are told that 'qui tutto ciò che appare strambo vien fatto scaturire da filosofia'. Here we see how the concepts of reason and justice come to be corrupted: Justice is seen to be administered by a representative of an alien form of Reason which, according to the people's conceptions, is irrational. In contrast to the image of Reason as stramberia, the narrator's fascist uncle presents the view of reason as 'order' (pp. 26-27, pp. 33-34, p. 44), but a suggestion of the true consistency

of the fascist 'order' that saw Italy 'feared and respected' in the world is made in the figure of this armchair fascist, prone to hysteria, who, 'i grandi sconvolgimenti sempre se li figurava intorno al suo letto' (p. 43), and whose 'reasoning' permits self-contradiction and justifies every form of 'order' and Justice at the expense of coherence. It is, of course, this uncle who adapts most readily to the 'order' offered by the Americans' material wealth and by De Gasperi's American-backed 'partito d'ordine' (p. 44). It is this uncle who shares the American aunt's conception of 'onore' (p. 38, pp. 51-52) as that of the bandit Salvatore Giuliano and the New York mafioso, and her pathological, instinctive rather than rational fear of communism.

If Sciascia's narrator in La zia d'America is liberated by experience from his childish belief in the myth of American materialism as the solution to Sicily's problems, and feels an instinctive affinity to the socialism of his friend's father (pp. 18-19), in La morte di Stalin the author seems to want to establish a certain distance between himself and the equal and opposite myth of Stalin which, in its turn, called for a surrender of reason. For what it is worth, La morte di Stalin is the only one of the four stories in Gli zii di Sicilia not to be narrated in the first person: however, although there is no identification of the narrator with the protagonist, the conflicting statements which Sciascia made on various occasions suggest that the question of his relationship to the character is more complex, and that there is, in fact, an element of self-satire in the character of Calogero. Indeed, even if he

was later to qualify his statement, emphasizing his doubts at the time and distancing himself, therefore, from the communist circle in Caltanissetta (14), Sciascia described (in the interview published in Lotta continua already referred to above (see note (5))), how, on the occasion of the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-aggression Pact (23 August 1939), a faith similar to that of Calogero had tranquilized his fears:

'Quando hanno fatto il patto, io ho avuto l'insonnia per almeno un mese. Me ne sono liberato pensando poi all'infallibilità di Stalin - in quel momento sono stato stalinista - e ho pensato: Stalin sta giocando Hitler, è una mossa, una finta, al momento giusto darà il colpo. E così si è attenuata l'insonnia'. (La palma va a nord, p. 112)

There is a clear reference to the 'religious' nature of this type of faith in the analogy between papal infallibility and that of Stalin.

Calogero Schirò's communism is shown to have the best of intentions, the product of a deep-rooted desire to sweep away not only the political injustices of Fascism and Nazism but also the social injustices of his corner of Sicily: 'Niente sarebbe stato vincere la Germania se uomini di Regalpetra e di Cianciana dovevano continuare a vivere come bestie' (p. 80). His idea of justice, however, is not untainted by the desire for vendetta which characterizes the social revolution portrayed by, amongst others, Verga in Libertà.

The principal theme of La morte di Stalin is the irrational nature of Calogero's faith. The repetition of the word ragione and its derivatives to the point of the

grotesque (about thirty times in the thirty-odd pages of the racconto), reminiscent of some of De Roberto's and Brancati's works, serves to underline the fact that Calogero's 'reasoning' is, in fact, anything but rational, and it creates a farce-like atmosphere. It is, in fact, a form of ratiocination that finds the buona ragione (p. 48), the desired explanation to every event. This is shown, in terms not dissimilar to those of Brancati in the best of his anti-conformist writing, by the fact that Calogero is happy when surrounded by 'disciples' who 'consentivano senza riserve' (pp. 74-75), while Calogero himself, in his unquestioning faith, is not perturbed by obviously contradictory evidence (p. 75). The arciprete, who serves as foil and 'straight-man' to Calogero, and as a catalyst provoking him into ever more strenuous feats of unreason, explicitly criticizes this fault: "'Ma che ragionare? Se chiami ragionare quello che ti esce di bocca, la ragione è bella e morta"' (p. 67).

Apart from the obvious narrative function of the priest, the juxtaposition of the two caricatures serves to indicate the (equally obvious) religious nature of Calogero's political faith. This aspect emerges explicitly, not only from the infallibility attributed by Calogero to Stalin, but also from his description of the communist leader as 'il più grande uomo del mondo, l'uomo che la faccia del mondo avrebbe cambiato, il più grande e il più giusto uomo' (p. 77) and 'il protettore dei poveri e dei deboli' (p. 79), which presents him in the terminology traditionally reserved for Christ or a saint (the second reference is reminiscent

of the language of the 'Beatitudes'), but not without complicating connotations of a capomafia, and in Calogero's offer to hang a picture of Saint Joseph alongside his portrait of Stalin if the priest will erect a similar diptych in the canonica (pp. 77-78). It appears less explicitly in the 'esame di coscienza' provoked in Calogero by the first appearance of Stalin in his dreams (p. 63), and in the fact that Calogero's doubts are considered by his comrades 'errore gravissimo' (p. 81), a sort of mortal sin or heresy. There is something mystical in the way in which Calogero arrives at his conclusions; not by reasoning, as he claims, but by sudden and mysterious revelation (p. 68, p. 82). It is worth noting that in these examples Sciascia places the irrational 'revelation' in direct contrast to Enlightenment terms:

Da questi dubbi lo salvò l'arciprete, voleva un po' sfotterlo per le sconfitte che ai russi toccavano, suscitò invece tutte le forze razionali di Calogero, un lampo in cui l'oscurità degli avvenimenti di colpo si squarciò... Improvvisamente la verità gli si era rivelata. (p. 68: my italics)

Calogero imagines Stalin's mind 'come una mappa che in punti diversi continuamente si illuminasse...; sulla scacchiera del mondo Stalin faceva le sue mosse e Calogero, per misteriosa rivelazione le conosceva' (p. 82: my italics). There is also a parallelism between Calogero's farce-like battute with the priest and with the communist deputato, a 'priest' of his own faith: "'Vogliamo ragionare?' "E ragioniamo..." disse l'arciprete' (p. 67); "'Bisogna ragionare..." "E ragioniamo" disse Calogero' (p. 89). The parallelism between communism and religion in La morte di

Stalin is not original, of course, but it does find effective expression in the dichotomy of faith and reason at the centre of the story.

If in La morte di Stalin there is an affinity of content and treatment to certain pages of Brancati, in Il quarantotto, the third of the stories in this collection, Sciascia tackles a theme which links him to other 'masters' of Sicilian narrative; namely, that of the inevitable failure of the political revolutions in Sicily already dealt with by Verga in Mastro-don Gesualdo (1888), by De Roberto in I Viceré (1894), touched on by Pirandello in I vecchi e i giovani (1913), and, at the time Sciascia was publishing his story, about to reappear in its 'definitive' version in Tomasi di Lampedusa's Il Gattopardo (1960). Sciascia's racconto perhaps owes most in tone to De Roberto's novel (15), but, paradoxically, without the epic construction of De Roberto's novel, Sciascia's use of caricature is wearing (16).

Sciascia's treatment of the theme of the Risorgimento adds little to our view of that event, but in this short story the author makes use of a self-conscious narrator to describe the solace to be gained from writing: 'Scrivere mi pare un modo di trovare consolazione e riposo; un modo di ritrovarmi, al di fuori delle contraddizioni della vita, finalmente in un destino di verità' (p. 110). This is the first direct reference to the task which Sciascia sets himself in the 1967 note to Le parrocchie di Regalpetra; that of 'putting in order' the history of Sicily, of drawing the rational ideal ('verità') from the irrational reality

('contraddizioni'). To what extent the author later recognized the dangers of such a tempting refuge (comparable to that of Tomasi di Lampedusa's aristocratic Don Fabrizio), I intend to show in the course of my analysis.

A further reference to the written word as truth can be seen in the lesson imparted by don Paolo Vitale, from whom the narrator says he learnt to draw on nature, on books and on his own thoughts as a source of company and faith (p. 132). This last point is also a clear reference to the Enlightenment ideal of faith in individual human reason. Don Paolo's faith in reason, however, is not an abstract ideal, and contains an implicit criticism of liberal idealism: 'Liberale veramente non era: l'amore alla libertà gli nasceva dalla sofferenza del popolo, la libertà del popolo era il pane' (p. 133). This somewhat patronizing attitude of 'books for intellectuals and bread for popolani' is a much-simplified version of the ideas of Carlo Pisacane (1818-1857), socialista risorgimentale, who pointed to social revolution as the key to the success of a political revolution, and who is mentioned briefly in Il quarantotto (pp. 152-3). This raises the question as to whether this is irony on Sciascia's part, putting the words of a radical socialist into the mouth of a priest, or if it is a reference to the 'social' content of the New Testament, in contrast to the temporal interests of Monsignor Calabrò, the bishop.

There is in Il quarantotto, however, an ambivalence of the written word parallel to that already noted in connexion with the concepts of reason and justice. Representing the

other side of the coin are the baron's letters to the authorities, denouncing his enemies (p. 102, p. 117), and those of the bishop, 'di stile, sottili e insinuanti, a volte grondano accorata benevolenza per le vittime designate' (p. 117): here the duplicity of the written word is explicit. One of the baron's letters generates another unjust piece of writing, the warrant for the arrest as a revolutionary of the innocent Pepé, which permits the baron to carry on undisturbed his relationship with the victim's wife (p. 106). In contrast to the publications arriving from liberals in exile in Malta, there are the 'lettere di contrizione' of those 'liberals' whose political faith is not sufficiently strong to cause them to sacrifice their homes and security (pp. 149-50), who are, one is given to believe, more opportunists of the kind seen in La zia d'America. Suspicion of the written word is evident in the baron's opinion of the stramba filosofia of his wife's ancestor of anarchist tendencies who wrote books in Latin (p. 146), and in the narrator's father's fear that reading would bring about the ruin of his son (p. 151): interestingly, this premonition comes true, in the sense that the narrator is subsequently forced to live outside society because of his adherence to his principles, recognition by Sciascia, perhaps, of the destiny of such an idealist.

The exercise of reason is the central motif of L'antimonio, the last of the short stories in the collection. Through his experiences of the unjust and irrational Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War

(17), the narrator loses his initial naivety ('Io sono andato in Spagna che sapevo appena leggere e scrivere' (p. 204): and reading and writing stand for more than literacy here, they represent the ability to interpret reality, to 'read' the world), and gradually acquires an understanding of the war in Spain, of the nature of Fascism in Italy, of the world and mankind (p. 176). The acquired ability to read, that is to understand 'le cose più ardue che un uomo può pensare e scrivere' (p. 204), leads him to exalt the dignifying powers of human reason in a sort of primitive illuminismo: 'Scoprivo che l'uomo, col suo cuore vivo, per la pace del suo cuore può legare in armonia pietra e luce, ogni cosa alzare ed ordinare al di sopra di se stesso' (p. 223). His experience in the war is described as a kind of baptism, not of fire as in the cliché, but of knowledge and justice, freeing the heart: once again, the themes of reason, justice and liberty are brought together by the author (but the freedom is of an individual, rather than social kind). There are references to 'il sonno delle abitudini', and to the indifference of the narrator's friends and relatives to his newly-acquired awareness as their desire to sleep (p. 228), which bring to mind certain motifs in Brancati's writing (18), or the theme of Goya's drawing, 'El sueño de la razon produce monstruos'. Remembering Sciascia's attachment to the imagery of the Spanish artist (19), it is possible to see a connexion between the monsters of the artist and the nightmarish sensations evoked in the narrator by the surrender of the anti-fascist soldiers and its horrific consequences: 'In

testa mi venivano cose di sogno, una cabala di cose' (p. 170).

L'antimonio, too, deals with the theme of the ambivalence of the written word. In the brief note explaining the title, Sciascia refers to the uses of antimonio in gunpowder, printing and cosmetics, implying a link with the artifice of war-propaganda, although there is also the idea of the 'explosive' force of the written word. The narrator's experience teaches him not to trust the word of journalists, a profession he compares to that of the sensali, whose 'official', written word contrasts with reality, always at the expense of the oppressed (p. 211, p. 216).

The narrator talks of the purity of the pazzia of the anarchists, and of the fundamental capacity to understand of the most ignorant of peasants, 'il più "oscuro" diciamo noi' (p. 206). The pride of the Spaniards, on the other hand, is described as 'irragionevole' (p. 205). A world of corrupted values is represented by Spain and Sicily, and once again reason itself is seen to have at least two faces. Indeed, while the narrator's 'reason', guided by his natural inclination towards social justice (p. 185), leads him to a marxist idea of the justice of civil war (p. 212), even if he concludes that absolute justice is not to be found under any regime (pp. 173-6), Ventura's understanding, which is largely responsible for the enlightenment of the narrator, produces in him a form of self-interested apoliticism and a belief in justice in the mafia sense of the word.

In the stories of Gli zii di Sicilia there is a marked tendency towards the idea of books and writing (conoscenza)

representing a sort of personal refuge (La zia d'America (p. 56), Il quarantotto (p. 110), L'antimonio (p. 222)) which, while maintaining its attachment to the ideals of freedom and justice, to some extent has lost the immediate contact with society which could be seen in Le parrocchie di Regalpetra. In L'antimonio the narrator speaks of the way in which his knowledge and understanding isolate him. He is an enlightened individual who, without a political banner, risks isolation, which is, perhaps, an inherent problem of liberal humanist individualism: Sciascia does not attempt to suggest what banner such individuals should unite under, even if his works are, inevitably, an attempt of some kind to communicate with like-minded people. The faith in reason and in the consequent freedom and justice proclaimed by Sciascia in Le parrocchie di Regalpetra was, at that time, a real social value but, subsequently, in the face of its continual defeat, it came to represent 'un segno di liberazione nel cuore; di conoscenza; di giustizia' (L'antimonio (p. 222); my italics). The world of books becomes a personal refuge, with the writer isolated in, and by, his consciousness. From this isolation, he sought to maintain standards of freedom and justice guided by reason, and to act as a moral guide to society: his absolute refusal to compromise brought him into conflict with those who have accepted the machiavellian principle that the realities of the administration of power (le contraddizioni della vita) make compromise the only choice. In this progression we can see a reflection of the way in which Sciascia, while remaining an attentive and critical observer of the world,

came in some ways to be isolated from it in his own world of books. Given that Sciascia's own cultural and political experience in Sicily seemed to demonstrate the impossibility of collective action, it was perhaps inevitable that, while continuing to denounce injustice, he should be drawn to a position resembling, in this respect, that of the other two authors examined in this study (20).

As I have already indicated, Sciascia aimed in the stories of Gli zii di Sicilia to portray the way in which solutions to the injustices of Sicilian society were sought in the mythical exaltation of 'realtà lontane'. It is, to some extent, possible to suggest that in La zia d'America and La morte di Stalin, he wanted to demonstrate his own liberation from the myths of two such distant realities, but that what emerges in their place, in Il quarantotto and L'antimonio particularly, is perhaps no less mythical a solution to those problems.

Sciascia's first novel, and the book for which he was best known for many years, was published in 1961, and demonstrated Sciascia's continuing interest in analysing the themes of power and reason, and in denouncing the injustice, in this case in the form of the mafia, produced by the exercise of the former without the latter. Thirty years later, it is important to remember that when Il giorno della civetta first appeared, with its portrait of the mafia as it existed at that time, the mafia phenomenon had not even been officially recognized by those same institutions which today make such a show of their fight against organized crime. It was only in 1963 that the first parliamentary commission was

set up to investigate the phenomenon, and indeed the episode in Il giorno della civetta in which a member of parliament rises from the government benches to deny the very existence of the mafia is based on actual events (21), such an attitude being common, at that time, among those members of the ruling class in Sicily, whose power was founded on collusion with the mafia.

In this first novel, Sciascia demonstrated his skill as a writer of 'detective fiction', and he was frequently to make use of the genre as a basis for his analyses of modern society, an aspect of his work to which I shall return later. In Il giorno della civetta, the author's ability to entertain the reader and sustain his or her interest throughout the book enabled him to reach a vast reading public with his description of the mafia and its political ramifications, subsequently corroborated by the work of sociologists and historians (22). Sciascia's novel presents the mafia in the context of Sicily's history of government without reason, of the failure of enlightened values to penetrate the island's society and of the survival in their place of totally unrelated conceptions of justice, power and the law, a theme which the very title introduces, with its capovolgimento of conventions and its suggestion of a 'world of darkness' (23). Foremost among the signs of this history is the distrust of the apparatus of Justice of vast sections of the community, from the witnesses to the murder of Cola-sberna (pp. 10-13), to his brothers and partners (pp. 15-21), and to the widow of Nicolosi, the second murder victim (pp. 38-42). The distrust of the surviving members of the

Santa Fara cooperative is exasperated by the presence, during their interview with Bellodi, of the carabiniere behind the typewriter ready to commit to paper their words, but who, in their eyes, is capable of corrupting those words to enable them to be used against their innocent speakers:

Dalla sua presenza ebbero mortale inquietudine, il terrore della spietata inquisizione, della nera semenza della scrittura. Bianca campagna, nera semenza: l'uomo che la fa, sempre la pensa dice l'indovinello della scrittura. (p. 16; author's italics)

Their joy at having been treated so gently and courteously by Bellodi is tainted by their suspicion regarding the captain's motives for having them write their personal details on a sheet of paper, a suspicion related to their cultural background which saw in the written word an instrument of the powerful against the oppressed (hence, historically, the burning of official papers in popular uprisings).

Sciascia juxtaposes contrasting views regarding the nature of law - those of the informant Parrinieddu and of the ex-partisan Captain Bellodi - two diametrically opposite conceptions which, for the illustration they provide of a total corruption of values, it is worth quoting extensively:

Non, per il confidente, la legge che nasce dalla ragione ed è ragione, ma la legge di un uomo, che nasce dai pensieri e dagli umori di quest'uomo, dal graffio che si può fare sbarbandosi o dal buon caffè che ha bevuto, l'assoluta irrazionalità della legge, ad ogni momento creata da colui che comanda, dalla guardia municipale o dal maresciallo, dal questore o dal giudice; da chi ha la forza, insomma. Che la legge fosse immutabilmente scritta ed uguale per tutti, il confidente non aveva mai creduto, né poteva: tra i ricchi e i poveri, tra i sapienti e gli ignoranti, c'erano gli uomini della legge; e potevano, questi uomini, allungare da una parte sola il braccio dell'arbitrio, l'altra parte dovevano proteggere e difendere. (p. 28)

Ma il capitano Bellodi, emiliano di Parma, per tradizione familiare repubblicano, e per convinzione, faceva quello che in antico si diceva il mestiere delle armi, e in un corpo di polizia, con la fede di un uomo che ha partecipato a una rivoluzione e dalla rivoluzione ha visto sorgere la legge: e questa legge che assicurava libertà e giustizia, la legge della Repubblica, serviva e faceva rispettare... Sarebbe rimasto smarrito, il confidente, a sapere di avere di fronte un uomo, carabiniere e per giunta ufficiale, che l'autorità di cui era investito considerava come il chirurgo considera il bisturi: uno strumento da usare con precauzione, con precisione, con sicurezza; che riteneva la legge scaturita dall'idea di giustizia e alla giustizia congiunto ogni atto che dalla legge muovesse. Un difficile e amaro mestiere, insomma: ma il confidente lo vedeva felice, la felicità della forza e del sopruso, tanto più intensa quanto più grande la misura di sofferenza che ad altri uomini si può imporre. (p. 29)

A conception of the law similar to that of Parrinieddu is expressed by the mafioso, Rosario Pizzuco, who claims to have advised Colasberna 'di infilarsi in politica per il canale giusto' in order to improve his business, the right channel being, of course, that of the government party: 'Chi comanda fa legge, e chi vuole godere della legge deve stare con chi comanda' (p. 77). Pizzuco's cynical apoliticism reflects the 'philosophy' at the root of electoral clientelismo, enabling us to identify the origin of this phenomenon in the abuse of power which has characterized much of Sicily's history. Bellodi, himself, is obliged to recognize the historical causes of the unbridgeable gulf separating his idea of the law from that of the people surrounding him, and to accept the impossibility of his obtaining information from the old man whose vicious dog, Barruggieddu, is named after the bargello, Bellodi's counterpart in earlier times:

Capì che non c'era niente da cavare da uno che riteneva il capo degli sbirri cattivo quanto il proprio cane. E non è che avesse torto, pensava il capitano: da secoli i bargelli mordevano gli uomini come lui, magari li facevano assicurare, come diceva il vecchio, e poi mordevano.

Che cosa erano stati i bargelli se non strumenti della usurpazione e dell'arbitrio. (p. 86)

Sciascia sought, as Verina Jones points out, to demythify the mafia, to show it for what it is, 'not merely a more or less colourful protection racket... but also an electoral machine, if not the electoral machine, in Sicily, and... an inseparable aspect of the political game at the national level' (Writers and Society, p. 246). However, the book's lasting commercial success is undoubtedly due, in part, to the fascination inspired in all circles by the theme of the mafia. The sense of 'mystery' surrounding the subject can be attributed to the work of film directors and writers such as Mario Puzo, who sensed its commercial potential, but who, unlike Sciascia, were not interested in analysing the phenomenon, and have chosen instead to emphasize its most sensational aspects. Perhaps more disturbing is the contribution to this process made by more 'serious' writers and journalists who, even today, occasionally betray their moral opposition to the mafia by their use of the language of mystification and mythification (24). Ironically, Sciascia implicitly criticizes this type of fascination in the closing episode of Il giorno della civetta, in which the girls in Parma are depicted by Sciascia's choice of language as frivolous and superficial, repeating the various clichés regarding Sicily and the Sicilians:

Adoravano la Sicilia. Abbrividirono deliziosamente dei coltelli che, secondo loro, la gelosia faceva lampeggiare. Compiansero le donne siciliane e un po' le invidiarono. Il rosso del sangue diventò il rosso di Guttuso. Il gallo di Picasso, che faceva da copertina al Bell'Antonio di Brancati, dissero delizioso emblema della Sicilia. Di nuovo abbrividirono pensando alla mafia; e chiesero spiegazioni, racconti delle terribili cose che,

certamente, il capitano aveva visto. (p. 117)

To satisfy their curiosity, Bellodi recounts a suitable episode which they duly find 'delizioso' (p. 118). Significantly, the girls' superficiality is implicitly one of the elements which leads Bellodi to the realization that he loves Sicily and will return there to continue his fight for justice, regardless of the consequences. In spite of, or perhaps because of his idealism, his determination, that is, to assert a form of justice based on reason, Bellodi, too, is seen to be isolated and to be obliged to work largely on his own, while the other members of the justice system, whose role as collaborators is, significantly, played down, are virtually dragged along in his wake. Again, Sciascia chooses to emphasize the individual action of a rational hero rather than a collective endeavour: this tends to imply a lack of faith on the author's part in the possibility of such co-operation, revealing the extent to which he, himself, was conditioned by his own cultural environment.

With Bellodi vowing to return to Sicily to continue his fight for 'la legge che nasce dalla ragione ed è ragione', Sciascia, himself, turned his attention to the Age of Reason, retaining a Sicilian setting in his next novel, Il Consiglio d'Egitto (1963), but projecting his imagination back in time to a moment which, in the author's Enlightenment-orientated view of history, was to determine the future of the island. The long epigraph from Courier's Lettres de France et d'Italie describing how close the Napoleonic troops were to Sicily, and yet, how unattainable the island remained to them, symbolized for Sciascia the

failure of liberal ideas of the Enlightenment, such as the abolition of feudalism, to penetrate Sicilian society (25). This historical interpretation, coinciding with the view of the historian Rosario Romeo among others, is brought vividly to life in Sciascia's portrayal of Palermo's feudal aristocracy (26).

The author described the genesis of Il Consiglio d'Egitto in La Sicilia come metafora (p. 69), and mentioned as sources of inspiration Domenico Scinà's literary history of Sicily (27), the diaries of the Marchese di Villabianca (28), and the various archive documents concerning Giuseppe Vella's 'arabica impostura' (29). If in Le parrocchie di Regalpetra and in the stories of Gli zii di Sicilia it had been Sciascia's intention to rewrite the history of Sicily, to write, that is, the history of the oppressed and unrepresented masses, in Il Consiglio d'Egitto he set about illustrating the partiality of 'traditional' history. Closely linked to this idea are the themes, which have already been mentioned in connexion with his earlier works, of the equivocal nature of reason and of writing, the most 'rational' of the arts.

The background to the first part of Il Consiglio d'Egitto is the struggle between the viceroy Caracciolo and the island's aristocracy, seen, in an arrangement characteristic of eighteenth-century European society, enjoying the fruits of their distant feudi in the extravagant and frivolous society of Palermo, described as 'il labirinto della voluttà e dell'ozio' (p. 33). In Sciascia's account, Caracciolo, former ambassador of the Neapolitan court to Paris and

personal friend of D'Alembert, in his heavy-handed if well-intentioned attempts to sweep away the abuses of feudal privilege, symbolizes the absolutist, authoritarian face of the Enlightenment, and for the idealist Di Blasi he represents the possibility of government by Reason (30). His appointment as viceroy takes him, in Di Blasi's mind, 'dal luogo della ragione all'hic sunt leones, al deserto in cui la sabbia della più irrazionale tradizione subito copriva l'orma di ogni ardimento' (p. 71). Caracciolo directs his assault on the concrete targets of the tax system (p. 37; Romeo, p. 62) and on the tacit impunity enjoyed by the aristocracy (p. 33), but also on the injustices symbolized by the written word: the burning of the archives of the Inquisition, lamented by the Marchese di Geraci (31), represents for the viceroy and for Di Blasi a sign of changing times, a victory over the anti-reason of the Inquisition, albeit with methods reminiscent of the institution under attack. Di Blasi ironically refers to the motto of the Inquisition 'Exurge, Domine, et judica causam tuam', alluding to the way in which the institution had indeed arbitrated in favour of its own familiari, the aristocracy and the rich, with the implication, reflecting the sad reality, that even divine justice is corrupted to represent the will of the potenti: these words, too, are physically destroyed, chipped from the Palazzo dello Steri in an attempt to obliterate this aspect of history. A further example of this attitude is represented by the burning of De Gregorio's treatises legitimizing the baronial abuses of power (32). With these acts Caracciolo was

attempting to sweep away the products of the culture which had dominated in Sicily for centuries and which, according to Romeo, was the only culture able to flourish in a society in which intellectuals who were not themselves members of the aristocracy or the clergy depended almost totally on the patronage of these groups (33).

As already mentioned, it has been argued that Vella's impostura was directly proposed and encouraged by members of the Bourbon government in Sicily as a means of filling the gaps created by Caracciolo's bonfires with doctrine supporting the monarchy's cause. Sciascia prefers to attribute the conception of the the Consiglio di Egitto to the genius of Vella, to his ability to read the times (p. 42), thereby signalling the affair as a victory of 'imagination' over 'power': this version supports the author's idealism (derived from the Enlightenment tradition but somewhat discredited by more recent critical trends), which saw in literature a means of interpreting reality. Whichever hypothesis regarding the origin of the false codex is correct, it is true that it did, indeed, provide the government with 'proof' of the validity of its claims, enabling it to undermine further the position of the feudal aristocracy. In Sciascia's racconto, the 'manuscript' is the means by which Vella seeks to obtain honours from the Crown (34) but, at the same time, he uses it as an instrument of blackmail against the Sicilian aristocracy: indeed, Vella threatens to document the history of feudal usurpation with a reconstruction of the truth:

Tutto quel complesso di dottrine che la cultura siciliana aveva in più secoli, ingegnosamente, con artificio,

elaborato per i baroni, a difesa dei loro privilegi: una giustapposizione di elementi storici sapientemente isolati, definiti, interpretati ... ora ... veniva rivelandosi come impostura: e don Giuseppe, che di impostura si intendeva, cominciava a capirne l'ingranaggio. (pp. 42-3; my italics)

Paradoxically, his 'fiction' is more truthful than these 'historical documents': indeed, when Vella sets about the falsification of the Consiglio di Egitto, he begins to frequent Francesco Paolo Di Blasi and his two uncles 'a prender lumi sul costituzionalismo siciliano' (p. 44; my italics), a choice of words obviously intended by Sciascia to suggest the 'enlightening' value of Vella's invention.

Di Blasi is the only person capable of attempting an historical view, of recognizing the fact that Vella's imposture is merely a product of the society and the moment:

'Questo è uno di quei fatti che servono a definire una società, un momento storico. In realtà, se in Sicilia la cultura non fosse strumento in mano al potere baronale, e quindi finzione e falsificazione della realtà, della storia ... l'avventura dell'abate Vella sarebbe stata impossibile'. (p. 126)

The historian and the novelist, Romeo and Sciascia, agree on the fact that culture, ideally the product of 'reason', was at the service of the forces of power. It is interesting to note that Rosario Gregorio who, in Sciascia's novel is Don Giuseppe's principal antagonist, is singled out by Romeo as the greatest Sicilian scholar of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, and as the author of a history of Sicily which confers full authority on the monarchy's cause in language clearly intended to win favour at the court (Romeo, p. 89).

In spite of his 'anti-rational' philosophy ('"Bisogna

andar cauti... I pensieri che attingono alle idee sono come i tumori: ti crescono dentro e ti strozzano, ti accecano" (p. 53; my italics)) and his professed contempt for history (he explains to his assistant that 'il lavoro dello storico è tutto un imbroglio, un'impostura: e che c'era più merito ad inventarla, la storia, che a trascriverla da vecchie carte, da antiche lapidi, da antichi sepolcri' (p. 59)), Sciascia's Don Giuseppe expresses an historical consciousness ahead of his times:

'La storia! E mio padre? E vostro padre? E il gorgoglio delle loro viscere vuote? E la voce della loro fame? Credete che si sentirà, nella storia? Che ci sarà uno storico che avrà orecchio talmente fine da sentirlo?' (p. 59)

In spite of himself, he shows this instinctive awareness of social injustice which renders plausible his later personal conversion to a state of mind in sympathy with Di Blasi's rationalism (pp. 153-4), and preannounces the profound disgust provoked by the thought of the torture and execution of his friend, which is parallel to Di Blasi's own, more reasoned thoughts while being tortured (pp. 146-9):

Sentiva improvvisamente l'infamia di vivere dentro un mondo in cui la tortura e la forza appartenevano alla legge, alla giustizia: lo sentiva come un malessere fisico, come un urto di vomito. (p. 164)

Once again, the very concept of justice is corrupted. Vella's desire to read Beccaria's treatise on torture represents his 'conversion' to eighteenth-century liberal ideas, a conversion to a vague ideal of government by 'le teste che ragionano' (p. 154). This rationalism is not, however, completely untainted by Don Giuseppe's old

cynicism, even if his friendship with Di Blasi helps him to chase away the image of 'i pidocchi della ragione' which insinuates itself into his thoughts (p. 155).

In contrast to Di Blasi's ideal of reason inextricably linked to the concepts of freedom, equality and justice (p. 24, p. 37, p. 127) there is the logic of power, of the aristocracy, according to which 'liberty' means the preservation of their privilege and impunity (p. 23, p. 37), while 'Justice' is that served on the contadini at the whim of the barons (p. 127), or that which adopts torture as its instrument 'contro il diritto, contro la ragione, contro l'uomo' (p. 146). In support of this concept of Justice, there is, of course, a written culture, the product of the corruption of 'reason' by 'power': 'i giuristi della tortura, il Farinaccio e il Marsili ... il loro stolto giudizio' (p. 158; my italics), are juxtaposed with the 'versi di Dante, dell'Ariosto, del Metastasio' which Di Blasi uses to resist his torturers, opposing 'la forza della mente' to the weakness of his body (p. 148, p. 157). Monsignor Airoidi's convoluted reasoning that Vella's ignorance is reliable proof of the authenticity of the Consiglio di Sicilia is a case of personal interests overruling the doubt created by a paradox. Scinà's Airoidi is sceptical from the start, but this 'historical' version fails to explain the prelate's patronage of the falsifier and his works. Sciascia's Airoidi seeks to deny or postpone the consequences of Vella's confession by suggesting that the latter's mind has been 'oscurato' by worries when, in fact, Vella seeks to shed light on the affair. The device of

holding the paper 'controluce' as a means of revealing the truth (p. 124) has obvious 'enlightenment' connotations, and is re-used by Sciascia in his next novel, A ciascuno il suo.

In Il Consiglio d'Egitto, books have different values for different characters. For the Contessa di Regalpetra, Diderot is 'delizioso' (p. 38): 'una opinione aristocratica che nella maggioranza dei casi vedeva nella letteratura illuministica solo un passatempo elegante e alla moda' (Romeo, p. 52). For Monsignor Lopez y Royo, the complete opposite, in Vella's eyes, of the 'uomini intelligenti, liberi, arguti, tolleranti' who had preceded him as viceroy (p. 109), books are the evil seed, '"tutta roba che vuole sconvolgere il mondo, corrompere ogni virtù"' (p. 110). For the ignorant, obtuse and vulgar Don Vincenzo Di Pietro, embarrassed by Di Blasi's culture and bewildered by Meli's irony, '"fa tutta una setta, la gente che imbratta carta"' (p. 24). But for Giuseppe Vella and for Francesco Paolo Di Blasi, books represent the key to other worlds: Vella's is an artistic world created by a sort of alchemy which invests even the instruments of writing with mystical powers (35), and penetrates and transforms reality (p. 31), eventually leading him to the 'heretical' thought 'che il mondo della verità fosse questo: degli uomini vivi, della storia, dei libri' (p. 181).

As we have seen, Di Blasi makes use of his culture in an attempt to dominate the pain induced by torture, but before this his books represent the ideals which he would have liked to have seen at the heart of the French Revolution and which were to guide his own uprising against the feudal

regime in Sicily (p. 119). As Vella comes to feel instinctively, so too Di Blasi believes that "'è la storia che riscatta l'uomo dalla menzogna, lo porta alla verità"' (p. 119); his love of books is not a love of erudition, but of the truth, and perhaps even of life, for the confiscation of his books, more than his own arrest, signals for him the beginning of his death (pp. 138-9). Di Blasi too, however, recognizes the ambivalent power of the written word: on Caracciolo's departure he considers how 'sarebbe bastato un tratto di penna a ricostituire quei privilegi che si era adoperato a demolire' (p. 72). He recognizes, too, the ambivalence of the word itself: 'libertà', for example, is used to define the privilege of the Sicilian aristocracy (pp. 23-24, p. 37); a revolt against Caracciolo's enlightened but absolutist and authoritarian government, he says, "'non sarebbe una rivoluzione: sarebbe appunto il contrario di una rivoluzione"' (p. 54). It is Di Blasi who, convinced of the verisimilitude of the Consiglio di Egitto, recognizes the lucid rhetoric of Vella's lie in triumph over the confused reason of Hager's truth (pp. 116-19) and whose thoughts juxtapose the antagonistic concepts of power and reason:

Aveva sentito in Hager, inequivocabilmente, l'accento della passione, della verità; la dolente impotenza e ripugnanza dell'uomo onesto di fronte alla prepotente menzogna. (pp. 118-19)

It is Di Blasi who, ironically, becomes the victim of the paradoxical quality of words: the spread of revolutionary movements is attributed to the indulgence of Caracciolo and Caramanico (p. 109), while it is, in fact, the reaction of Lopez y Royo that spurs Di Blasi to act; on the discovery of

the planned uprising, in order to dispel any popular sympathy for the revolt, Monsignor Lopez diffuses the 'finezza propagandistica' that the intention of the revolutionaries had been to loot the churches during the Easter celebrations (p. 142), making Di Blasi out to be no more than a thief with 'ideas' (pp. 144-5), and this corruption of the truth, as much as the 'privilege' of execution by decapitation, distinguishing him from his fellow conspirators, constitutes a form of contrappasso for Di Blasi, and is the token of his defeat and of the defeat of reason.

There is a marked difference between Sciascia's treatment of historical documents in Il Consiglio d'Egitto and in Morte dell'Inquisitore (1964). Stepping back further in time to a period of Sicily's history in which the attempts at relatively enlightened government of a figure like Caracciolo would have been unimaginable, to the days of the Inquisition, the memory of which Caracciolo later sought to erase, the author adopted a more 'documentary' style, as though to suggest that the subject in hand precluded elements of humour and the use of a 'dramatic' technique, both of which can be found in Il Consiglio d'Egitto. In spite of the supposedly 'historical' approach in Morte dell'Inquisitore, described by the author as '(a mio modo) un saggio di storia' (Morte dell'Inquisitore, p. 243: for edition, see note (3) above), Sciascia frequently intervenes in the text to express his indignation at the injustices described or his sympathy with his compaesano, Fra Diego La Matina, whom he portrays as an enlightened rebel, like Di Blasi, defeated

by a society which denied reason (36). Sciascia assembles and comments on the information concerning the life of Fra Diego, burnt at the stake in 1658 as a heretic and the murderer of the Inquisitor, don Giovanni Lopez de Cisneros, attempting by reconstruction and deduction to solve the mystery surrounding the precise nature of Fra Diego's heresy. He puts forward the theory that this was originally of as much a 'social' as a theological nature, that it was 'nata... da una razionale aspirazione', and may have boiled down to the idea that 'Dio non poteva, senza essere ingiusto, consentire all'ingiustizia del mondo' (p. 227). The historical principle behind Morte dell'Inquisitore bears a strong resemblance to that which emerged in Il Consiglio d'Egitto and, indeed, the basis of Sciascia's theory is an interpretation of the surviving 'historical' documents which, he suggests, are distorted by an interest in silencing such a heresy (indeed Sciascia accuses the historians of the event of a kind of omertà (pp. 219-27), revealing once again the injustice and partiality of a history which is seen from the point of view of institutional power) and in presenting its exponent as 'un ladro e non un uomo di idee' (p. 199), in the same way that Di Blasi was to be presented to his contemporaries.

In his description of the procedures of the Inquisition, Sciascia presents it as 'una istituzione che di per sé era offesa alla ragione umana e al diritto' (p. 229), and contrasts its intolerance with 'la forza del pensiero' of Fra Diego (p. 211): to the grotesque atrocity of the Inquisition he opposes the dignity of Fra Diego (p. 211,

p. 214, p. 231) and his 'tenace concetto' (p. 223, p. 243 note), an uncompromising loyalty to his own moral principles with which Sciascia certainly identified.

Sciascia sets Fra Diego's 'heresy' and the orthodoxy of the Inquisitors against the background of what he describes as the fundamental heresy of the predominant Sicilian mentality, 'l'irreligiosità di tutto un popolo', as expressed in the proverb, 'Cu havi la cummudità e nun si nni servi, mancu lu confissuri cci l'assorvi' (pp. 186-7). This is evidently a corruption of the sacrament of confession and of the Christian concept of sin itself: Christian morality is substituted by the self-interested amorality which Sciascia had shown in the place of political conscience (37). At the same time, the Inquisition, ostensibly the Church's defence against heresy, is seen as an aristocratic institution, serving the temporal interests of its 'familiari' (38).

The year 1965 saw Sciascia's first excursion into the world of the theatre, with L'onorevole (39), in which he combined the pirandellian themes of madness and fissità with his own discussion of the corrupting influence of power. Notwithstanding the leap forward to the modern era and the change in tone and medium, there are clear links between this play and the documentary Sciascia had published the previous year. Assunta, one of Sciascia's rare female protagonists (40), is declared insane by the society in which she lives: this, however, is merely a defence mechanism of a society in which reason has been corrupted, and is triggered by her dissent in the same way that Fra

Diego's dissent had led him to be condemned as a heretic, for 'madness', in some contexts, can be seen as the scientific age's equivalent to the 'heresy' of a previous age.

Assunta's position is also comparable, in this respect, with that of Beatrice Fiorica in Pirandello's play, Il berretto a sonagli (1918), whose mother's name, incidentally, is Assunta. Both Beatrice and Sciascia's Assunta challenge the complacent amorality of their respective societies; both denounce their respective husbands, the first for adultery, the second for his part in a general process of corruption: both are persuaded to play the part of una pazza so that the truths they speak may be suppressed or ignored. Ciampa, the aggrieved fourth party in Il berretto a sonagli, explains to Beatrice the paradoxical and irrational nature of society:

'Niente ci vuole a far la pazza, creda a me! Gliel'insegno io come si fa. Basta che lei si metta a gridare in faccia a tutti la verità. Nessuno ci crede, e tutti la prendono per pazza!' (41)

As in the short story La morte di Stalin, Sciascia makes repeated use in L'onorevole of the term ragione and its derivatives, playing on the various meanings of the word, to underline the conflict between power and reason. Monsignor Barbarino, in September 1947, in what he describes as a decisive moment for the future of the country and for the very survival of the Church in Italy, describes the reason for his visit (to persuade Frangipane to stand as a Christian Democrat candidate in the following year's general elections, the first since the foundation of the Republic)

as "'un'altra ragione: una ben più profonda e giusta ragione"' than that which Frangipane had imagined (a raccomandazione for the forthcoming school examination resits) (pp. 12-13): Sciascia's play on the words 'giusta' and 'ragione' enable one to detect in Barbarino's mind an identification of the interests of the Church and of the Christian Democrats with 'justice'. When Fofò, the young communist engaged to the daughter of the future onorevole Frangipane, begins to temper his intransigence in order to consider the new situation created by Frangipane's candidature in the list of the Christian Democrats, he says: "'E ragioniamo..."' (p. 23), which is underlined by its position at the end of the first act. Given the flexibility of this term in the mouths of characters created elsewhere by Sciascia, it is no surprise to the spectators when, in the second act, they find that Fofò's 'reasoning' has brought him whole-heartedly into the opposite camp. Frangipane, himself, while still a teacher and guided by his conscience, finds in the fee paid to him by Margano for private lessons "'ragione di cocente rimorso"' because he is aware of how little the student is capable of learning (p. 7): in the second act, however, which takes place five years later, he is prepared to recognize the fact "'che aveva ragione"' don Giovannino Scimeni, the mafioso whom he had scorned at the beginning of his political career, but who had subsequently proved himself to be "'un grande amico"' (pp. 27-8: here, Frangipane subscribes to the corrupted conception of amicizia which Sciascia had first shown in Le parrocchie di Regalpetra). He attributes the

failure of other members of his party to be re-elected in 1953 not to the wave of popular revolt against the proposal of the legge truffa (42), but to "altre ragioni" such as the failure to recognize the reality of the system of clientelismo, of which he provides a clear definition:

'Un deputato, qui, deve essere una specie di sbriga-faccende: deve occuparsi di passaporti, di portodarmi, di pensioni, di assicurazioni, di sussidi. O almeno deve far finta di occuparsene. E poi qualche favore lo deve fare, in qualche caso deve saper chiudere gli occhi e buttarsi giù: non dico nell'illecito, per carità; ma, come si dice nel gergo degli studenti, nella particolarità. "Il professore fa particolarità". Io, come professore, non ne ho mai fatte; ma come deputato sono costretto a farne'. (pp. 30-1)

Frangipane has clearly compromised the integrity which had been the basis of his election, in exchange for the guarantee of political power and the possibility of furthering his personal interests, and his association of the word 'ragione' to this form of self-justification, albeit with the sense of 'motive', reflects his adoption of a form of reasoning belonging to the power system.

Assunta is the only character in L'onorevole who retains her integrity. In her discussion with Barbarino, she expresses the moral of the work:

'Dal momento in cui mio marito è diventato deputato, qui, in ciascuno di noi, si è verificata una corruzione, un disfacimento delle idee, dei sentimenti...E sa che mi viene di pensare? Che la nostra storia, la storia della nostra famiglia, sia come il simbolo di una corruzione più vasta, di un più grande disfacimento'. (p. 54)

Assunta alone questions the logic of her husband and of Monsignor Barbarino who both attempt to justify a machiavellian distinction between moral principles and

political practice (43): "Il moralismo, caro monsignore, è una specie di fillossera nella pratica politica" (p. 31);

BARBARINO Ma signora, la vita pratica, l'attività politica in modo particolare, costringono un uomo a lottare anche su un terreno che non gli è proprio, e contro avversari anche indegni... Noi stessi, costretti a scendere sul terreno precario e infido della politica, ci troviamo a trattare con persone che non assolveremmo nella confessione, e magari a sostenerle. (p. 55)

Sciascia was later to describe the duty of the intellectual as a struggle against this type of machiavellian thought, against power and against the submission of reason to doctrines: 'Ben vengano... gli intellettuali impegnati, ma purché si battano sempre contro il Principe, contro i Poteri, contro le Chiese, anche se si tratta di quelle che credono' (La palma va a nord, p. 54 (June 1978)). This is a further example of Sciascia's constant reference to reason as an individual response, and of the attitude which led him away from collective action and into a somewhat isolated position.

Both Frangipane (after his election, and almost in spite of himself (p. 28)) and Barbarino (pp. 61-2) also concur with another machiavellian distinction, between books and reality, a distinction which Sciascia, himself, does not recognize: 'Io sono arrivato a non vedere più confini tra letteratura e realtà' (La palma va a nord, pp. 109-10 (October 1978): this and similar statements will be discussed in detail below). This theme is central to Cervantes's masterpiece, Don Quixote, which, until his election, is the book chosen by Frangipane in his moments of relaxation, and which Assunta fixes on as a symbol of the

reason and integrity abandoned by her husband. Don Quixote's madness consists principally in his rejection of the conventions of his own society, which he substitutes with the values he finds in chivalric literature: over the ages, the book has been interpreted variously as a satire on imagination, exalting reason and concrete reality, and as a celebration of imagination and idealism, over banal rationalisation and reality; whatever the author's intention, before dying, don Quixote is made to confess the error of his ways, dismissing as madness his pursuit of chivalric ideals:

'Ormai ho il giudizio libero e chiaro, senza le ombre calig[i]nose dell'ignoranza in cui me l'aveva avvolto l'incresciosa e continua lettura dei detestabili libri di cavalleria. Ormai capisco le loro assurdità e i loro inganni e non mi dispiace altro se non che il riconoscimento di quest'errore sia giunto così tardi da non lasciarmi tempo di fare alcune ammenda, leggendone altri che siano luce dell'anima'. (44)

Sciascia subverts this reconciliation with the values of society, preferring to extol the 'subversive' qualities of books, for when Assunta is finally forced to accept that, at least according to the corrupt values of the others, she is mad, she reserves the right to define for herself the terms of her madness and the conditions of her convalescence:

BARBARINO Da oggi in poi lei deve riposare: niente libri. O, se mai, qualcuno di quei libri allegri, leggeri... Me lo promette?

ASSUNTA (risollevandosi, decisa) No. Spero anzi che mi permettano di leggere tanti libri: e di quelli che fanno pensare, che fanno impazzire... Perché non sono tanto pazza da non potere impazzire ancora di più... Almeno lo spero, così come spero ci siano altri pazzi come me, nel mondo... (L'onorevole, p. 62)

Assunta is the embodiment of Sciascia's belief that mankind

is left with 'soltanto la letteratura per riconoscersi e conoscere la verità' (La palma va a nord, p. 155: February '79), a belief challenged by much modern thought, as I have already had cause to remark, but one to which Sciascia was to return in his subsequent works and which will be discussed in detail below.

Sciascia begins A ciascuno il suo with an epigraph from Poe's The Murders in the Rue Morgue (1841; 1845):

Let it not be supposed ... that I am detailing any mystery, or penning any romance. (45)

Verina Jones sees in this a statement of this view that writing is 'a tool for the understanding of a reality other than itself' (Writers and Society, p. 235), and indeed, Sciascia himself describes this novel as the product of an almost mechanical decision to explain an historical reality: 'Mi ero detto: "Voglio scrivere il resoconto di un fallimento storico, il fallimento del centrosinistra"' (La Sicilia come metafora, pp. 69-70). In the early 1960s, social unrest and fears of a military coup were among the factors which encouraged the DC and PSI respectively to shelve their mutual distrust and to form the power bloc promoted by Fanfani since 1957, as a means, too, of isolating the PCI. In 1962, the socialists abstained to allow the formation of a DC/PSDI coalition under Fanfani, and at the end of the following year, joined Moro's DC/PSDI/PRI alliance. The PSI was to be present for the first time at the formation of a government when Moro began his second administration in July 1964. Sciascia summed up the centrosinistra in this way:

Fin quando fu certa di dominare il gioco politico, la DC non intraprese la minima riforma. Si alleò dunque con i socialisti soltanto nel 1964, cercando persino di divorarseli. (La Sicilia come metafora, p. 124)

Given Sciascia's criticism of Tomasi di Lampedusa's politics, it is ironic that this view of the Italian political scene should bring to mind Tancredi's words to his uncle: "'Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi"' (46).

The quotation from Poe also refers to the fact that the elements of the mystery which Paolo Laurana struggles to piece together during the course of the novel are, all along, common knowledge to the other, more worldly members of the community to which he belongs, but Sciascia's novel contains more than a passing reference to Poe's story. The two senses of the reference are united in A ciascuno il suo when Sciascia adopts the conceit of opposing the 'reality' of his story to the fiction of the detective genre, in which it is 'l'acutezza degli inquirenti' that leads to the solution of the crime:

Che un delitto si offra agli inquirenti come un quadro i cui elementi materiali e, per così dire, stilistici consentano, se sottilmente reperiti e analizzati, una sicura attribuzione, è corollario di tutti quei romanzi polizieschi cui buona parte dell'umanità si abbevera. Nella realtà le cose stanno però diversamente. (47)

Laurana's intellectual curiosity is aroused first by a pedantic interest in the form and language of the denuncia (p. 16), but when, 'fortuitamente... per l'obliqua luce che vi cadeva' (p. 27; and immediately, in the choice of the word obliqua we see that the 'light' guiding Laurana's

rational processes is in some way distorted), he learns that the threatening letter to Manno is made up from pieces of the Osservatore romano - a clue ignored by the police - in his vanity he attributes this to his own exceptional insight,

quasi che ad altri non fosse dato di penetrare in un così evidente segreto o in una così segreta evidenza; cui appunto bisognava, per la contraddizione che conteneva, una mente libera e pronta. (p. 28)

Ironically, since, in the end, he is seen to be the only person lacking intuition. Laurana would, without doubt like to imagine himself in the role of Poe's 'analyst', Dupin:

As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which disentangles. He derives pleasure from even the most trivial occupations bringing his talent into play. He is fond of enigmas, of conundrums, hieroglyphics; exhibiting in his solutions of each a degree of acumen which appears to the ordinary apprehension praeternatural. His results, brought about by the very soul and essence of method, have, in truth, the whole air of intuition. (Poe, p. 189; author's italics)

Laurana's curiosity in the solution to the murder of Manno and Roscio is, however, clearly intended as a parody of the hyperbole used by Poe in describing his hero's qualities, as can be seen from the pejorative context and terms chosen by Sciascia:

Era, insomma, un po' nella condizione di chi, in un salotto o in un circolo, sente enunciare uno di quei problemi a rompicapo che i cretini sono sempre pronti a proporre e, quel che è peggio, a risolvere; e sa che è un giuoco insulso, un perditempo: tra gente insulsa e che ha tempo da perdere: e tuttavia si sente impegnato a risolverlo, e vi si accanisce. (p. 44; my italics)

Indeed, Sciascia's investigator has more in common with

Poe's policeman, Vidocq, whom Dupin describes thus:

'He was a good guesser, and a persevering man. But, without educated thought, he erred continually by the very intensity of his investigations. He impaired his vision by holding the object too close. He might see, perhaps, one or two points with unusual clearness, but in so doing he necessarily lost sight of the matter as a whole. (Poe, p. 204)

Laurana, too, succeeds in perceiving one or two details, but each time loses sight of the whole. Twice Sciascia uses the term abbagliare in this context: 'era rimasto abbagliato da quel dettaglio' of the Osservatore romano (p. 39); when he meets Rosello in the company of Raganà, the cigar the latter is smoking enables Laurana to recognize in him the killer of Manno and Roscio, but is described as another 'abbagliante elemento che era venuto ad aggiungersi a quelli che già conosceva' (p. 81). Before this discovery, his reasoning is obscured by his repressed lust for Luisa Roscio, which Sciascia describes with the oxymoron 'il buio sole del desiderio' (p. 70; cf. 'il male, insomma, nel suo incarnarsi, nel suo farsi oscuramente e splendidamente sesso', p. 110; my italics), and it is the same feeling that convinces him of her innocence, against the evidence he has gathered, and leads him into the trap she sets for him.

Sciascia points to the reasons for Laurana's failure. He is not the same type of enlightened hero as Bellodi or Di Blasi but merely 'un uomo onesto, meticoloso, triste; non molto intelligente, e anzi con momenti di positiva ottusità' (p. 42), and a victim of his over-bearing mother (48). His eventual defeat is not symbolic of the defeat of reason in the form we have seen previously, of reason as the guiding

force of a struggle for justice, and indeed, Laurana is specifically distanced from the ideas of Justice or justice:

L'idea che la soluzione del problema portasse, come si dice, ad assicurare i colpevoli alla giustizia, e quindi tout court alla giustizia, non gli balenava nemmeno. Era un uomo civile, ... rispettoso della legge: ma ad aver coscienza di rubare il mestiere alla polizia... avrebbe sentito tale repugnanza da lasciar perdere il problema. (p. 44)

We are told that this feeling is caused partly by 'i secoli d'infamia che un popolo oppresso, un popolo sempre vinto, aveva fatto pesare sulla legge e su coloro che ne erano strumenti' (p. 102), reminding the reader of similar attitudes towards the law in some of Sciascia's earlier works: Laurana, unlike some of Sciascia's other heroes, has not substituted institutional Justice with a sense of moral justice and so, in this respect, is closer to the 'irrational' society in which he moves. His curiosity regarding the crime, and even his passion for his teaching and critical work, more than rationalism, appear as the outlet for his sexual frustrations.

What Sciascia does in A ciascuno il suo is provide a further picture of a society in which all values are overturned. At the root of this society is the 'religione della roba' first described by Verga and represented here principally by Laurana's mother who invokes Christian 'charity' for la roba (p. 106) as a reason for Luisa Roscio's remarriage to her cousin.

It is, however, in politics that the corruption of values, or the total erosion of principles is most evident. Laurana expresses Roscio's belief, and his own, in moral

principles as the guiding force of political action, but this idea is scoffed at by his old school friend, now a communist deputato, as qualunquismo: the description of this incident is a prediction of the much-repeated condemnation of Sciascia's own adoption of just such a position (but the degree of identification of Sciascia with Laurana is limited), to which I shall refer in detail in my analysis of Il contesto and its reception by left-wing critics. The communist deputato cynically, but accurately attributes Roscio's increased diffidence towards the governing parties to personal interests, although, unaware of the adultery of Roscio's wife with her cousin, the local Christian Democrat notabile, he guesses at a motive linked to the system of clientelismo: "Gli avranno forse soffiato via qualche prebenda, qualche incarico" (p. 56).

Rosello's political activity, as consigliere provinciale, is purely a game of prestige and power, aimed at absorbing the opposition and consolidating his personal position. In this, Rosello and his mentor, l'onorevole Abello embody 'l'eterna immutabilità dell'eterno fascismo italiano', the process of undermining all attempts to introduce even apparently radical change in order to preserve the right of a restricted group within society to control political and economic power, which, as Sciascia says in La Sicilia come metafora (p. 70), had rendered vain that attempt to change the nature of Italian politics represented by the experiment of the centrosinistra: again, Sciascia's view of Italian politics, with its insistence on 'immutabilità' underlined by the repetition of the adjective, betrays the author's

fundamental pessimism.

Rosello had been the proposer of his fellow Christian Democrat councillors' shift "'dall'alleanza coi fascisti a quella coi socialisti"' (A ciascuno il suo, p. 74), and, predicts the 'parroco di Sant'Anna', will be alert to any opening of his party towards the communists allowing another such alliance. Abello, in spite of his anti-marxist fame, accepts his party's move towards the Left, as Rosello explains to Laurana: "'E perché no? Abbiamo rosicchiato per vent'anni a destra, ora e tempo di cominciare a rosicchiare a sinistra. Tanto, non cambia niente"' (p. 83). Rosello resembles any number of characters from the century of Sicilian narrative preceding him, but Abello, although not fundamentally different, assumes more menacing proportions, perhaps by virtue of the succinctness of the way he is described, expressing the essence of the philosophy behind trasformismo: 'un campione di moralità e di dottrina' in the eyes of his followers (p. 79), he is praised by one of them as "'un uomo straordinario, che ha idee talmente grandi che queste miserie di destra e di sinistra... per lui non hanno senso"' (p. 84). Clearly, the 'morality' of those in power, which seems rather to consist in a total lack of principles, differs from the moral code which Roscio and Laurana ideally believe should guide those who exercise power. It should, however, be noted that, in fact, both Roscio and Laurana act more out of personal interest than according to any moral principles, a detail which, notwithstanding the similarity of their fates, namely their defeat and elimination by the society against which they pit themselves, distinguishes

them from other, more purely rational heroes in Sciascia's works.

In A ciascuno il suo, three characters with a degree of insight express judgements on the society which surrounds them, but each of them is shown in a somewhat equivocal light. Each of them, despite their rational qualities, has, to some extent, lost sight of the principle of justice which Sciascia had previously suggested is born out of reason, but which, he accepts here, is not its inevitable consequence. This is a characteristic procedure adopted by Sciascia, and one which sheds light on his conceptions of reason and morality. Sciascia's works contain, for instance, a number of characters whose involvement in the workings of a corrupt society and whose intelligence provide them with a profound understanding of the nature of that society, which they share with the 'investigator' figure and the reader. These characters, too, represent a form of reason, but one divorced from any traditional sense of justice: in spite of their consciousness of corruption, the influence on them of power or political and economic interests is such that they feel no remorse, but only occasionally some degree of disgust at their own involvement. Such is the case of Rieti in Il cavaliere e la morte (1988) and, in A ciascuno il suo, of the 'parroco di Sant'Anna', who offers Laurana his analysis of the extent of corruption in the local society from the vantage point of "un verme dello stesso formaggio", and predicts the future collaboration between communists and Christian Democrats (pp. 74-5). Don Gaetano in Todo modo (1974) is not totally unrelated to these

characters, but his more complex nature will be discussed in greater detail below.

From the one extreme of involvement in the corrupt activities of society, Sciascia passes to another extreme in his analysis of the many facets of reason. Don Benito's 'madness' is, in part, a capacity, similar to that of Assunta Frangipane, for speaking the truth in a society which no longer recognizes the truth. There is in don Benito, however, an introversion of his reason, resulting in total cynicism. This is shown by his self-imposed seclusion in his house and, above all, in his library. To be able to talk to Laurana, he has first to remove 'una piccola barricata di libri' (p. 86): books seem no longer to be a means of deciphering a confused reality, but rather a defence against an outside world full of thieves and imbeciles. Even so, don Benito's refuge is imperfect:

'Non è che non mi capiti, anche qui dentro, di imbattermi nei ladri, negli imbecilli... Parlo di scrittori, beninteso, non di personaggi... Ma qui dentro è diverso: mi sento più sicuro, più distante'. (pp. 88-9)

In this statement, obviously open to psycho-analytical comment (but, surprisingly, not picked up on by Jackson in her discussion of what she describes as the element of agoraphobia in Sciascia's works (Jackson, pp. 42-53)), Sciascia seems to acknowledge this kind of introspection as one of the dangers of the isolation he had previously portrayed as an almost inevitable (and not necessarily negative) result of the exercise of reason in an irrational society. Despite the author's insistence on the value of books as a means of interpreting reality, which I have

already had cause to mention and to which I shall refer again, it is impossible not to see don Benito in a somewhat negative light and, therefore, to recognize in him an element of self-satire by Sciascia.

The ambivalence of don Benito is hinted at in the explanation he offers Laurana of his name, which, he says comes not from "quel tale" but from Benito Juarez, the Mexican revolutionary and, as he continues, "dietro Benito Juarez, nascondo un Giuseppe Napoleone. Ma non è escluso che il Giuseppe sia, per così dire, ambivalente tra Bonaparte e Mazzini" (49).

Notwithstanding this ambivalence and his isolation, don Benito is able to provide Laurana with the name of the murderer of Manno and Roscio, and, during the course of their conversation, he also offers views, close to the author's own, on the corrupting force of power:

'Uno... arriva a trovarsi una piccola e magari scomoda nicchia nel potere, e da quella nicchia ecco che comincia a distinguere l'interesse dello Stato da quella del cittadino, il diritto del suo elettore da quello del suo avversario, la convenienza dalla giustizia'. (p. 87)

This is clearly an allusion to the triumph of power over reason and justice. With don Benito, Sciascia's discussion of these themes takes a further step away from the purely local context, anticipating the atmosphere of later works such as Il contesto (1971), Todo modo (1974) and, most recently, Il cavaliere e la morte (1988), in which the setting is no longer Sicilian, but the 'rational hero' finds himself isolated in an irrational society which has undergone 'una sicilianizzazione, e cioè una disgregazione

sociale secondo l'antico e stabile modello siciliano' (50). Don Benito defines Italy as 'un così felice paese che quando si cominciano a combattere le mafie vernacole vuol dire che già se ne è stabilita una in lingua' (p. 90), referring to the Fascist repression of the mafia in Sicily and, despite Laurana's objections, hinting at the 'mafia' of collusion between administrators and industrialists (51).

To Laurana's disgust, don Benito also expresses doubt about the utility of a campaign against the mafia while, due to the effects of misgovernment, emigration, and agricultural and industrial decline, 'questa specie di nave corsara che è stata la Sicilia... affonda' (p. 92): Sciascia himself provoked strong criticism in January 1987 by suggesting that for politicians to take a high-profile public stand against the mafia is, by itself, an inadequate response to years of misgovernment, and that some of those involved in the antimafia probably play a double game (52). While it is understandable that Sciascia's comments should provoke an indignant reaction, it is also true that they denounce the situation in Sicily, and in Italy in general, where public services continue not to function and where clientelismo remains at the root of many public activities. At the same time, the way in which the definition garantista - used to describe Sciascia and anyone else who insists that the fight against the mafia and corruption be conducted with respect for both democratic principles and individual rights and liberties - has become almost a term of offence tends to suggest a process of legitimization of anti-democratic trends which, perhaps, confirms Sciascia's view of Italy's

'eterno fascismo': the writer did, to some extent, cast himself, and literature, in the role of the nation's moral conscience, but the problem of the exact meaning of terms such as democracy and liberty remained largely undefined, a problem stemming from the self-justifying nature of Sciascia's rational ideology and one to which I will have cause to return.

The third character in A ciascuno il suo to whom Sciascia chooses to attribute certain general perceptions is Roscio's father, the blind oculist, and light-heartedly, as though not to ask too much of his readers' belief, offers a kind of apology for this coincidence: 'per ironia della sorte o perché meglio si inverasse nel mito di uomo che aveva sfidato la natura ridando ai ciechi la vista e dalla natura nella vista era stato colpito' (p. 58). Professor Roscio hints at the nature of clientelismo, extending his definition to the institutionalized opposition, the communists, "'anch'essi, in un certo modo, al potere"' (p. 60). He cynically comments that he has never known a true Catholic in Sicily and describes those who pass as good Catholics as 'gente sempre pronta a mettere la mano nella tasca degli altri, a tirare un calcio alla faccia di un moribondo e un colpo di lupara alle reni di uno in buona salute' (p. 61): this description is clearly an inversion of the values proposed in the parable of the Good Samaritan, and contains a vague allusion to those responsible for his son's death, but Professor Roscio seems uninterested in bringing them to justice, blaming himself, to some extent, for his son's fate. Like that of don Benito, Professor Roscio's is an

introspective form of reason.

The many elements which suggest that, in A ciascuno il suo, the formula of the detective novel is largely a medium through which the author presents his view of a particular period in Italian history and politics did not prevent the work being interpreted, in general, as another novel about the mafia and about a specifically Sicilian situation (53). This purely 'Sicilian' interpretation of Sciascia's meaning, and the elements in his work which refute it, can be traced back to Il giorno della civetta, at the end of which Bellodi's old friend Brescianelli puts forward the idea that 'forse tutta l'Italia va diventando Sicilia', and suggests as a metaphor of this process the northward progress of 'la linea della palma... del caffè ristretto'. This episode has been interpreted simply as an endorsement by the author of the view that, rather than the attitudes of northern engineers and the like, transferred to the south, having had a 'civilizing' effect on the local population, the result of increased interaction between the north and south since the war has been 'the extension of a vicious, all-pervading clientelismo from its traditional homeland into all walks and regions of Italian life' (54). Regardless of whether or not this is a valid view of what has happened and is happening in Italian society, it is not, strictly speaking, what is intended by Sciascia who, indeed, presenting this idea through the somewhat fatuous Brescianelli, distances himself from such an opinion. Significantly, the distractions which Brescianelli offers are described as 'cose lontane', distant, that is, from Bellodi's own spirit.

The author's view is, perhaps, closer to the comment which, narrated in free indirect speech, seems to reproduce Bellodi's thought and only fortuitously to be answered by the other's effusions:

[Bellodi] sentì davvero bisogno di compagnia, bisogno di parlare, di svagare in cose lontane la sua collera.

Ma Brescianelli domandò della Sicilia: com'era, come ci si stava; e dei delitti.

Bellodi disse che la Sicilia era incredibile.

- Eh sì, dici bene: incredibile... Ho conosciuto anch'io dei siciliani: straordinari... E ora hanno la loro autonomia, il loro governo... Il governo della lupara, dico io... Incredibile: è la parola che ci vuole.

Incredibile è anche l'Italia: e bisogna andare in Sicilia per constatare quanto è incredibile l'Italia.

- Forse tutta l'Italia va diventando Sicilia... A me è venuta una fantasia, leggendo sui giornali gli scandali di quel governo regionale: gli scienziati dicono che la linea della palma... viene su, verso il nord, di cinquecento metri, mi pare, ogni anno... La linea della palma... Io invece dico: la linea del caffè ristretto... E sale come l'ago di mercurio di un termometro, questa linea della palma, del caffè forte, degli scandali: su su per l'Italia, ed è già oltre Roma. (p. 115; *my italics*)

In this long quotation we can see the unsympathetic light in which Brescianelli is shown, with his patronizing tone and his uninformed yet dogmatic judgements. The comment inserted in his pause for breath tends to imply that an analysis of Sicilian society can offer a key to the understanding of the national situation, rather than suggesting, as Brescianelli does, that the latter is the direct result of a corruption by the former (55). This interpretation of Sciascia's meaning would seem to be borne out by the author's subsequent references to this concept. In an interview published in 1974, to which I have already had cause to refer (see note (6)), he qualified his meaning, explicitly rejecting an interpretation which attributes the blame for corruption at national level to the spread of Sicilian

attitudes:

Le cose siciliane sono sempre più complicate e al tempo stesso più semplici di quanto si creda e di quanto si riesca a dire, a rappresentare. Intanto, non sono soltanto siciliane. Non lo sono ora e non lo sono mai state, soltanto siciliane. La Sicilia è mafiosa perché lo è l'Italia. E non lo dico io: lo diceva Napoleone Colajanni, tanti anni fa. E quando io ho parlato di una sicilianizzazione dell'Italia, non intendevo dire che il fenomeno mafioso si sarebbe diffuso in Italia, a causa dell'emigrazione o di che altro, ma che in Italia stava affermandosi una volontà del potere per il potere, al di fuori del corso delle idee, quale in Sicilia c'è stata per secoli. ('Non obbedisco', p. 14)

In I pugnalatori, as I have previously quoted, Sciascia was to define his conception of the term sicilianizzazione as 'una disgregazione sociale secondo l'antico e stabile modello siciliano' (p. 67): here, too, Sciascia's words tend to place the emphasis on the view of Sicily's problems as representative of those to be found in Italy, rather than the origin of all such problems. This, of course, is a question without an absolute answer, but Sciascia's stand was similar to that of many Sicilians, who, while not denying the nature and extent of the mafia phenomenon, justifiably resent the facile identification of corruption and criminality with the island.

Il contesto (1971) and Todo modo (1974) can be seen, therefore, as being, on one level, an attempt by Sciascia to remove the focus of attention from Sicily, which he claimed to detest and love to the same degree (La Sicilia come metafora, p. 118). The writer's wider aim in the two novels is a discussion of the nature of power in modern society, 'un apologo sul potere nel mondo, sul potere che sempre più digrada nella impenetrabile forma di una concatenazione che

approssimativamente possiamo dire mafiosa' (56), but the two works are not without strong allusions to the specific situation of Italy in the 1970s. These barely masked references to the contemporary state of Italian politics, going beyond the author's mock-earnest profession in the postscript to Il contesto that he was describing 'un paese del tutto immaginario' and that any similarities to Italy or Sicily were purely incidental, provoked harsh criticism from political commentators, particularly in the case of Il contesto, which became the subject of a fierce debate in the left-wing press outlined below. The events described in Todo modo, on the other hand, do take place in an explicitly Italian setting, albeit in the somewhat unreal atmosphere of the eremo-albergo di Zafer, but extra-textual support for an 'Italian' interpretation of both works can be found in one of the interviews mentioned above in which, speaking of Todo modo, published some months later, Sciascia described it as 'un racconto sui cattolici, sulla politica dei cattolici; l'altra faccia del Contesto, insomma' ('Non obbedisco', p. 14), and this statement justifies, too, my treatment of the two novels as 'a sort of literary diptych' (57). Elsewhere the author says that Il contesto was the indirect result of a desire to write a book, 'sia sulla situazione politica italiana, sia su quella mondiale', and describes it as the 'cronaca di una desertificazione ideologica e ideale che tuttavia in Italia era solo ai suoi inizi' (La Sicilia come metafora, p. 71), while he goes so far as to say of Todo modo that its central idea is 'la distruzione, anzi l'autodistruzione della DC' (La palma va a nord, p. 19

(March 1978)), and to define it as the work of 'un italiano che fa i conti con la Chiesa cattolica' (La palma va a nord, p. 147 (December 1978)).

It is probably most accurate to say that through a denunciation of the specific situation of Italian politics Sciascia arrives at an analysis of the exercise of power in general. In Il contesto, the author recreates the atmosphere of contradiction created by the emergence of the idea of a possible compromise between DC and PCI, and by the rebirth, as a result of the Sessantotto, of the myth of the possibility of realizing a violent revolution in Italy. Enrico Berlinguer was to speak of the 'compromesso storico' for the first time in 1973, in the wake of the military coup in Chile (58), and conceived it as a means of defending Italy from the threat of a similar antidemocratic reaction. For the leader of the PCI, it later developed into a project to combine Catholic and communist morality in a battle against the excesses of capitalism, but, at the time of writing Il contesto (and even earlier, given Professor Roscio's comment in A ciascuno il suo (p. 60)), Sciascia had already identified it as a steady process of absorption of the nominally radical opposition into the sphere of the parties in power. The protagonist of Todo modo is, on one level, neither don Gaetano nor the painter-narrator, but a Christian Democrat party whose twenty-five year relationship with power has brought about a divorce from the Christian morality which may, in part, have inspired its formation, but not, tellingly, from the Catholic Church in Italy. Indeed the only ideology which remains valid is that which

aspires to the exercise of power for its own sake, so that, as in Il contesto, 'solo il potere per il potere contava' (Il contesto, note, p. 121), and the essence of this state of affairs is well expressed in the following image:

Ministri, deputati, professori, artisti, finanzieri, industriali: quella che si suole chiamare la classe dirigente. E che cosa dirigeva in concreto, effettivamente? Una ragnatela nel vuoto, la propria labile ragnatela. Anche se di fili d'oro. (Todo modo, p. 74)

Don Gaetano's justification of the politics of the Church is comparable to Riches's argument concerning the infallibility of the judge (Il contesto, pp. 86-94):

'La grandezza della Chiesa... sta nel fatto di consustanziare una specie di storicismo assoluto: l'inevitabile e precisa necessità, l'utilità sicura, di ogni evento interno in rapporto al mondo, di ogni individuo che la serve e la testimonia, di ogni elemento della sua gerarchia, di ogni mutamento e successione'. (Todo modo, p. 48)

At the same time, and in spite of don Gaetano's professed contempt for the instruments used by the Church to manipulate temporal power (p. 104), it is a form of apologia, in a Jesuitical key, for Christian Democrat rule (59).

Sciascia's declarations on the subject of power help us to understand his position in these two novels. On two occasions - first, in 1975, shortly after the publication of Todo modo, as an independent in the list of the PCI for the local elections in Palermo, and second, in 1979, in the list of the Radical Party for the national and European assemblies - Sciascia accepted a mandate for the administration of political power, and recognized that, in doing so he went against his self-declared desire to

maintain 'un atteggiamento sempre polemico nei riguardi di qualsiasi potere', a desire stemming, he said, from the belief that fascism is not dead (La Sicilia come metafora, p. 85), and presumably, that participation in the exercise of power inevitably involves a degree of compromise with this fascism. At the same time, Sciascia expressed a more fundamental, more abstract aversion to the concept of power when he said that he considered it 'non già alcunché di diabolico, ma di ottuso e avversario della vera libertà dell'uomo' (La Sicilia come metafora, pp. 116-17), emphasizing once again the antagonism between power and reason. This antagonism was echoed in Sciascia's denial of the existence of any relationship between power and truth - 'Il potere non ha rapporto che con la menzogna' (60) - and when he attributed to literature the role of deciphering the version of truth presented by power - 'Per chi è provvisto di immaginazione il potere ha ormai acquisito una qualità fantastica. E' realtà... divenuta finzione, e per ridiventare realtà occorre che passi attraverso la letteratura' (61); 'Io credo che all'uomo, l'uomo umano, rimanga soltanto la letteratura per riconoscersi e conoscere la verità... Non è la letteratura che è fantasia, ma la realtà così come essa è presa e sistemata dal potere' (La palma va a nord, p. 155 (February 1979)). Sciascia described his own attitude to power as similar to that of Tolstoy in that he believed in non-violence and would have preferred to maintain his distance from it: 'Il potere è violenza, sotto qualsiasi forma è violenza. E' necessario che sia esercitato... ma bisogna starne lontani', and this attitude is related to the

author's belief in the truth of the paradox regarding the nature of politics, which he expressed with his own sophism: 'Non si può fare, tenendo conto dei principi morali, ma nemmeno si può fare, facendo a meno dei principi morali. Il machiavellismo ci ha molto guastato' (La palma va a nord, pp. 101 and 106 (October 1978)). Sciascia's own feeling, like that of some of his characters I have already examined, was that politics and ethics are or, at least, should be inseparable (62). Inevitably, these attitudes led frequently to conflict between the author and political activists.

In Il contesto, a form of rationalism is personified in the figure of Rogas who, we are told, 'aveva dei principi, in un paese in cui quasi nessuno ne aveva' (p. 12). Foremost among the manifestations of these principles is his desire, regardless of what interests he may disturb, to establish the truth: a desire which, upon his assignment to the case of the cadaveri eccellenti, puts him immediately in conflict with his superiors, whose interests lie in preserving the illusion of the unblemished integrity of the murdered magistrates, while, at the same time and like Bellodi, he exercises his powers with discretion and a sense of respect for others' dignity. Rogas's conception of justice rejects the irrational practices and procedures of the police and judicial systems, of 'Justice' in short, and favours instead the logical processes characteristic of the classic fictional investigator (p. 12, p. 15, p. 19), and indeed, at one point, the author alludes cryptically to the 'literary' quality of Rogas: 'Come ogni investigatore che si rispetti, che abbia cioè di se stesso quel rispetto che vuole poi

riscuotere dai lettori, Rogas viveva solo' (p. 82). He experiences a sense of freedom and pleasure when, in his examination of the cases linking the first two victims, he applies these processes to the demonstration of the divergence of official 'Justice' from his abstract idea of justice based on reason. On the contrary, the representatives of 'Justice' with whom he comes into contact represent the irrational, like his mad colleague, Inspector Magris (p. 12), or the late Judge Azar who, with his maniacal obsession with the danger of infection, has literary 'ancestors' in Consalvo in I Viceré and Duca Fausto Villadora in Gli anni perduti. Rogas subjects the facts to a rational analysis and finds sufficient grounds to begin an investigation into the possibility of an unjustly condemned man executing a reasoned if not reasonable plan of revenge on his judges and accusers, while, in contrast, his superiors refer to the murderer as 'quel pazzo furioso che senza ragione alcuna andava ammazzando giudici' (p. 16; my italics). In his trial, Cres, whose reasoning Rogas succeeds in tracing, had irritated his judges with 'il richiamo al buon senso, l'ironia', manifestations of a type of intelligence uncongenial to the administrators of 'Justice' (p. 32).

In both Il contesto and Todo modo, the representatives of reason come face to face with the sophistry of power. Riches, President of the Supreme Court, presents to Rogas his 'ragionamento' on the subject of justice: 'Come accadde nei manicomi, pensò Rogas, dove sempre incontri quello che ti blocca a confidarti la sua utopia, la sua civitas dei, il

suo falansterio' (p. 89). Riches's idea of justice is based on the principle that the individual no longer exists, nor, as a consequence, is there such a thing as individual responsibility: from this premise he concludes that "'l'errore giudiziario non esiste'", as each of us is guilty of the crimes committed by the masses (p. 87), and he makes the horrendous suggestion that the only possible form of administering 'Justice' is, and will be, by decimation (p. 90). The idea of the guilt of the masses will be echoed in Todo modo, in the discussion between the painter-narrator and don Gaetano on the subject of the law, and, pronounced by the latter, is restored to the context of the Christian doctrine of original sin:

- Se qui fossimo nell'isolamento più assoluto, al di fuori di ogni giurisdizione, non crede che saremmo costretti a inventare tra noi la legge che Scalambri rappresenta e a perseguire il colpevole?

- E' possibile anche il contrario: che tutti si diventasse, uno contro l'altro, colpevoli. E in verità quella che lei chiama l'invenzione della legge altro non è che questo: il diventare tutti colpevoli. (p. 103)

Riches compares the infallibility of the judge at the moment of passing sentence to that of the priest consecrating bread and wine, refuting what he calls 'l'opinione laica' regarding the administration of 'Justice' which, he says, stems from Voltaire's views on the subject as expressed in the Traité sur la tolérance (1763): these, in turn, are the product of "'tutto un humus, tutto un contesto'", the rational context of the Enlightenment against which Riches sets himself (pp. 86-9). While rejecting the culture of reason, Riches argues the right of 'la forza' to defend itself in any way against challenges to its legitimacy

(p. 92), affirming the values of 'power' over those of 'reason' (63).

Faced with this logica del potere and aware of the plot centred around Riches, against the State itself and by the very people who represent it (p. 83), Rogas begins to empathize with Cres, 'ad un certo punto diventa il suo alter ego' (note, p. 121). When, therefore, he discovers that Cres is living under an assumed name in the same building as Riches, he stands back and observes with detachment the concluding act of Cres's revenge, the murder of the President of the Supreme Court. At this point, Rogas seems to have accepted the 'justice' of Cres's actions, while he himself resolves to save the State from the dissolution caused by the wielding of power for its own sake. This can be seen in some ways as a symbol of the clash between reason and power, as a result of which the former becomes its own measure, outside the rules corrupted by the latter, and, as such, can also be seen to reflect Sciascia's personal position, outlined above, which has led many commentators to accuse him of qualunquismo. Cres's form of reason is certainly inward-looking and, if the ballistics reports regarding the deaths of Amar and Rogas are to be believed, we are presented with the possibility of the latter having followed Cres's example in electing his own reason as the ultimate authority to judge the administrators of power. In fact, Il contesto is ambiguous in its ending, which offers no definite solution to these deaths, and leaves the reader with a feeling that those in power are not telling the whole truth, anticipating the confusion surrounding, for example,

the real-life case of the DC-9 brought down near Ustica in 1980.

Il contesto, as has been mentioned above, is the book which provoked the strongest criticism of Sciascia, with perhaps the exception of L'affaire Moro, and, understandably, the fiercest criticism came from left-wing circles. While Michele Rago, literary critic of L'Unità, defined Il contesto as exceptional in its reconstruction of 'il volto del potere politico come astratto strumento di dominio', the Sicilian politician Napoleone Colajanni, writing in the same newspaper, concentrated his attention on the more concrete aspects of the novel's polemic and accused Sciascia of abandoning the cause of Sicily and of seeking to give 'spiegazioni facili' to complex and contradictory facts. If, on the one hand, one can understand Colajanni's feeling that Sciascia was throwing in the towel and seeking refuge 'nell'astrazione erudita e moralistica', on the other hand, it is impossible to imagine the author of Le parrocchie di Regalpetra, of La morte di Stalin, of L'antimonio accepting the politician's definition of 'l'invettiva' as 'la cosa meno rivoluzionaria possibile nella sua inutilità'. This fundamental difference of opinion between an anticonformist artist and a political activist was inevitable, and it was left to Renato Guttuso, artist and communist, to defend Sciascia's right to express his bitterness and disillusionment, at the same time distancing himself from Sciascia's views, while Emanuele Macaluso, another Sicilian communist and subsequently editor of L'Unità, criticized Sciascia for spreading 'solo scetticismo

e sfiducia, attraverso una deformazione della realtà sociale e politica in cui operiamo' and, in doing so, lending a hand to the antidemocratic forces wishing to discredit the Left in general and the communists in particular. Macaluso reproached Sciascia for always showing his rational heroes as isolated and defeated, and blamed Sciascia's bitterness on tiredness and resignation. Perhaps the most violent attack on Il contesto was that of Walter Pedullà in Avanti!, the newspaper of the PSI, in which Sciascia is accused of 'moralismo spicciolo', and Il contesto is defined as '[una] chiacchiera qualunquistica camuffata da riflessione superiore e distante di grande moralista' (64).

The reason why Il contesto angered communists and socialists so much was because of the suggestion it contained of the failure of the Left in its opposition role. In Sciascia's 'imaginary' country, the 'Partito Rivoluzionario Internazionale' is, it is hinted, in collusion with the ruling powers and is, itself, in a manner of speaking, in power: Professor Roscio's comment on the communists in A ciascuno il suo (p. 60) is a clear anticipation of this situation. Ideals and ideologies, the revolution itself, are sacrificed in the name of machiavellian realism ('"Siamo realisti, Signor Cusan. Non potevamo correre il rischio che scoppiasse una rivoluzione... Non in questo momento"' (p. 117)): in denouncing this incoherence (which can be identified with the refusal of the communist parties in France and Italy to take their cue from the uprisings of 1968 and the following years), the moralist Sciascia inevitably offended the sensibilities of those people who,

through their political activism, have resolved the problems connected with 'le contraddizioni della vita' (Il quarantotto, p. 110). At the same time, the picture presented by Sciascia of the 'revolutionary intellectual', Galano, and of the environment in which he moves is far from sympathetic, and yet, not without a certain correspondence to a 'historical' reality: indeed, by comparing the juvenile bickering between Galano and the writer Nocio over 'l'essere o non essere borghese' (pp. 64-6), the subordination of Nocio's wife to the 'guru' Galano, the analysis of the revolutionary movement offered by the equivocal Nocio (p. 56), and Rogas's own comment that, in his 'christian' sympathy for the defeated, he is discovering a love for the revolution, '"appunto perché è ormai sconfitta"' (p. 61), with the analysis of the revolutionary groups of the late 1960s and early 1970s in Paul Ginsborg's recent history of post-war Italy, it is possible to appreciate Sciascia's ability to recognize at close quarters the nature of society. Writing some fifteen to twenty years after the event, the historian describes an environment of which Sciascia had already depicted a microcosm:

I gruppi... erano fatalmente segnati fin dall'inizio. Essi, innanzitutto, erano molto spesso ferocemente settari, soprattutto sul piano ideologico. I loro quotidiani e periodici erano pieni di analisi teoriche e per lo più illeggibili, che quasi sempre miravano solo a dimostrare la maggiore correttezza politica di un gruppo rispetto agli altri... Divennero rapidamente delle versioni in piccolo dei principali partiti politici, con le loro gerarchie quasi esclusivamente maschili e con presuntuosi "leaderini"... Nessuno di loro analizzò in profondità la natura della società italiana nei tardi anni '60 e i possibili ostacoli alla diffusione di una coscienza rivoluzionaria. (Ginsborg, II, 424)

In Sciascia's description of the lifestyle of both Galano and Nocio, and in Rogas's comments on the probable whereabouts of the members of the revolutionary groups who, in the imagination of the head of the political section of the police, are in hiding ("Ma no. Saranno nelle ville dei loro padri, sui yacht" (p. 53)), we find not only an allusion to the fact that the ideals of social and economic equality and of a collective organization of society were not always practised by those who preached them, but also an implicit criticism of the failure of the promoters of revolution in Italy to take into account the way in which the process of modernization of Italian society had been based 'non... sulla responsabilità collettiva e sull'azione comune, ma sulle opportunità che offriva ai singoli nuclei familiari di migliorare il loro livello di vita' (Ginsborg, II, 463), a failure which was partly to blame for the movement's lack of success.

It is, of course, still possible to argue about the accuracy of Sciascia's description of this ideological vacuum or, indeed, of any one historian's interpretation of events, but, in the light of the activities of extra-parliamentary groups such as the Brigate rosse, the thesis of the failure of the parliamentary Left to provide adequate scope for the expression of opposition to the forces in power since the foundation of the Republic is certainly worth considering (65).

Todo modo is closely related to Il contesto and is, perhaps, the most complex of Sciascia's novels. If, in Il contesto, Colajanni saw a tendency towards abstract

erudition, Todo modo could be seen to provide confirmation of this impression. If, as is natural, all Sciascia's works bear the signs of the author's extensive and varied reading, in Todo modo the transtextual references and allusions become part of the very form of the novel: through his citation of philosophical texts, both Christian and non-Christian, don Gaetano illustrates how the written word can be manipulated to justify the sophistry of power.

Tom O'Neill indicates fanaticism as the principal subject of Sciascia's analysis in Todo modo:

There is, for example, the fanaticism of thought whereby traditional logical procedures are reversed in favour of paradox... There is also... the fanaticism of reading in which orthodoxy is subverted by heterodoxy with the result that intrinsically incompatible texts become, as it were, interchangeable. (O'Neill, pp. 222-3)

He further suggests that 'the juxtaposition or, perhaps, more accurately, the downgrading of the purely spiritual and speculative to the impurely carnal and pragmatic' in the dual epigraphs from Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite's Mystical Theology and Casanova's Storia della mia vita should be seen as a warning 'not to read what follows literally, not to believe unilaterally what is said or quoted in support of a given argument for there are always at least two sides to it' (p. 219). As we have seen, this corruption of reason and the ambiguous use of the written word are, in fact, a constant target of Sciascia's criticism.

However, even Sciascia's own quotation of Ignatius on the back cover of Todo modo is mischievously unorthodox, or rather, just as don Gaetano 'rewrites' Luke to serve his own

purposes (p. 103), so Sciascia reinvents the original text, giving it a more fanatical sense. Let us compare Sciascia's version - 'todo modo, todo modo, todo modo [...] para buscar y hallar la voluntad divina' - with the original:

Por este nombre, ejercicios espirituales, se entiende todo modo de examinar la conscientia, de meditar, de contemplar... Porque asi como el pasear, caminar y correr son ejercicios corporales; por la mesma manera todo modo de preparar y disponer el alma, para quitar de si todas las afecciones desordenadas, y después de quitadas para buscar y hallar la voluntad divina en la disposicion de su vida para la salud del alma, se llaman ejercicios espirituales. (66)

As Tom O'Neill has already suggested, this kind of unorthodox use of texts is typical of don Gaetano's reasoning, which is based on the dissolution of all values seen in the representatives of power in Sciascia's works from Le parrocchie di Regalpetra onwards. When, for example, the painter-narrator interprets his view of Christianity as 'il trionfo del male' (p. 76), don Gaetano rejects the use of the term 'male' and expresses his desire to 'escape' the restrictions imposed by words: '"Bisognerebbe decollare da queste parole, dalle parole... Bisognerebbe entrare nell'inesprimibile senza sentire la necessità di esprimerlo"' (pp. 76-7). These words echo those of the longer of the two epigraphs, in which Dionysius attempts to define the nature of 'la causa buona di tutte le cose', and it is perhaps sufficient to quote this brief section in order to see their relation to don Gaetano's paradoxical reasoning in the context of Todo modo: 'Non è numero né ordine né grandezza piccolezza uguaglianza disuguaglianza somiglianza dissomiglianza'. In response to the painter-narrator's criticism of

his apparent indifference as to whether or not the murderer of Michelozzi is brought to justice, don Gaetano replies dogmatically: "Lei torna alle parole che decidono, alle parole che dividono: migliore, peggiore; giusto, ingiusto; bianco, nero. E tutto invece non è che una caduta, una lunga caduta: come nei sogni" (pp. 77-8). Here, the word caduta reminds one inevitably of the doctrine of original sin, of which the reader is reminded again by don Gaetano's comment on the law and guilt (p. 103), referred to above. The Fall is also a central theme of Pascal's Pensées, a text of which Sciascia makes use in Todo modo and to which I shall return later on.

Don Gaetano's speech is dominated by arguments which involve a corruption of reason and the dissolution of values to which we have previously referred, by paradoxes of which he is fully aware and which he refers to as '[una] forma di verità' (p. 48): "Una forza senza forza, un potere senza potere, una realtà senza realtà" (p. 35); "Ma io sono tanto reazionario quanto rivoluzionario" (p. 41); "I preti buoni sono quelli cattivi" (p. 47); "Ma le mie certezze... sono altrettanto corrosive che i suoi dubbi" (p. 48) - the context and meaning of these arguments are, perhaps, of less interest to us than their form. Let us try to unravel the logic behind the insinuations don Gaetano aims at the magistrate, Scalambri:

'Dicevo del giudicare; dell'inquisire e del giudicare. E che Cristo avrà voluto forse affermare che solo i peggiori possono assumersi un simile compito; soltanto gli ultimi essere in questo i primi... Ma per carità!, non veda in questo mio divagare la minima allusione personale. Io di lei non so nulla. Nulla assolutamente', e lo disse fissandolo, e come se invece sapesse tutto. 'E d'altra parte, i termini peggiori e migliori io li

pronuncio in senso evangelico: appunto dei primi che saranno gli ultimi, degli ultimi che saranno i primi'. (pp. 92-3)

His blurring of distinctions enables him to appropriate texts, even the Bible, for his own ends, to use them as authorities in spite of themselves, a practice previously adopted by Consalvo in De Roberto's I Vicerè and L'Imperio. This process is hinted at early on in the novel when don Gaetano says of Ibn Zafer's Solwan el Mota': "'Capita che isolando qualche passo si veda, in un testo tutt'altro che cristiano, baluginare il cristianesimo"' (p. 28). On another occasion we are told more explicitly that, during a discussion on Pius II's Commentari, don Gaetano 'era in grado di citare a memoria tutti i passi che gli facevano giuoco' (p. 35; my italics). The most extreme example of his manipulation of texts is, however, his accommodation of Voltaire:

'E' stato detto che il razionalismo di Voltaire ha uno sfondo teologico incommensurabile all'uomo quanto quello di Pascal. Io direi anche che il candore di Candido vale esattamente quanto lo spavento di Pascal, se non è addirittura la stessa cosa'. (p. 105)

The painter-narrator's discussions with don Gaetano bring him face to face with an interlocutor who, like Riches, is a fanatic in the sense given to the word by don Gaetano himself of 'chi ha delle certezze' (p. 48): "'Crede che potrei non esserlo, con questa veste?'" he asks the painter-narrator, while, at the beginning of his conversation with Rogas, we find Riches 'sorridendo beffardamente, dall'alto delle sue certezze' (Il contesto, p. 85). Tom O'Neill, in the essay referred to above, points to other elements which

justify drawing this parallel between the two and, what is most important, between their considerations on Voltaire's rationalism.

Writing to Sciascia from Paris to convey his immediate reactions on reading Todo modo, Calvino described his perplexity over the reference to Pascal's Pensées in the novel: in the two editions he had consulted, pensée 460 failed to correspond to that read by the narrator in the volume found mysteriously in his room after his discussion with don Gaetano and, consequently, the other pensées up to 477 referred to by the narrator but not quoted remained a mystery. Calvino regretted not having to hand the Einaudi edition and sensed that he therefore lacked 'un anello teologico per la soluzione logico-poliziesca' (67). If we look at the Pensieri in the translation by Paolo Serini to which Calvino referred, we find, as did Tom O'Neill, too late, unfortunately, to include a full analysis of the significance of the pensieri 460-477 in his essay on Todo modo, that 460 does indeed correspond to that quoted in Todo modo, while 477 is the last in the section entitled 'La soluzione biblica del problema dell'uomo'. Pensieri 460-77 in this edition include several which are echoed in Todo modo and which refer to recurrent themes in Sciascia's work. (As it was almost certainly this translation to which Sciascia referred, it seems legitimate to quote from it directly and not to include the original text.)

In Sciascia's novel, pensiero 460 itself assumes, in Tom O'Neill's opinion, 'an absolute quality which its very language with its twice-repeated "tutto" helps to underline;

and that repetition in its turn sends us back, even if only musically, to the rule of Ignatius which gives the novel its title: "todo modo, todo modo, todo modo... para buscar y hallar la voluntad divina..." (O'Neill, p. 222) and preannounces the note of fanaticism which dominates it. The translation reads, 'Poiché la sua vera natura è andata perduta, tutto diventa la sua natura; come, essendo perduto il vero bene, tutto diventa il suo vero bene' and alludes to the corruption of the cosmos as a result of Adam's sin (68). In the context of don Gaetano's sophistry, these words assume a paradoxical quality and become a justification of a corruption and confusion of values in the name of the Church. They send us back, too, to the longer of the two texts used as epigraph - that taken from Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite - and these texts, examined in the way suggested by the painter-narrator, that is to say 'in senso del tutto eterodosso' (pp. 50-1) become examples of the distance of Christian faith from reason.

Pensiero 461 reads as follows: 'Non c'è nulla sulla terra che non mostri o la miseria dell'uomo o la misericordia di Dio, o l'impotenza dell'uomo senza Dio o la potenza dell'uomo con Dio'. Apart from the fact that the phrase, 'la potenza dell'uomo con Dio', could be seen to assume an ironic relevance to the role of the Christian Democrats in post-war Italian history, this maxim reminds one of don Gaetano's 'contemplazione dell'imbecillità', which, he says, permits him to recognize the greatness of God: '"Non c'è niente di più profondo, di più abissale, di più vertiginoso, di più inattingibile"' (p. 13). At the same time, however,

it brings to mind the painter-narrator's motive for wishing to observe the esercizi spirituali, which don Gaetano recognizes as "'il gusto di cogliere altri in pratiche che lei, forse, ritiene non degne degli uomini; di deriderli"' (p. 16): the painter-narrator's contemplation of imbecility helps him to recognize the greatness of reason, his god. Don Gaetano and the painter-narrator represent two facets of a form of reason, and both of them are marked by a sense of superiority: the former's attitude towards the members of his 'congregation' is always one of more or less explicit contempt, while the latter approves and shares much of this sentiment. Their conflict could be seen as a battle between two extremes of rationalism and, in this light, pensiero 476 can be seen to apply to each of them, to the painter-narrator in its original sense and, by a process of reversal, to don Gaetano: 'Una delle confusioni dei dannati sarà di vedere che son condannati dalla loro ragione, con la quale han preteso di condannare la religione cristiana'.

The painter-narrator's observation of the 'esercizi spirituali' and, in particular, with his insistence on the darkness and the abject nature of the spectacle, of the recitation of the Rosary, seems to echo another of Pascal's thoughts:

Che cosa dobbiamo concludere da tutte queste oscurità in cui ci troviamo se non la nostra indegnità? (Pensiero 464)

Quell'andare su e giù nello spiazzale quasi buio, non come in un quieto passeggio ma a passo svelto, appunto come chi ha paura del buio e si affretta a raggiungere la zona di luce... E in quel momento anche chi, come me e come il cuoco, li vedeva nell'abietta mistificazione e nel grottesco, scopriva che c'era qualcosa di vero, vera paura, vera pena, in quel loro andare nel buio dicendo preghiere. (Todo modo, pp. 45-6)

As I have already had occasion to remark in my comments on Il quarantotto, Sciascia's use of the recitation of the Rosary as a symbol of the suppression of reason is similar to that of De Roberto in the short story and play, Il rosario (1889; 1899).

At the end of the last private conversation between don Gaetano and the painter-narrator, during which the former states his theory of the equivalence of Voltaire to Pascal and after which the latter makes the mysterious discovery of the Pensieri in his room, the priest attempts to explain the futility of his interlocutor's rational arguments: "'Non c'è fuga, da Dio; non è possibile. L'esodo da Dio è una marcia verso Dio"' (p. 105). He goes on to ask, "'Ma perché vuole reprimere in sé tutto ciò che la porta verso di noi? Perché vuol contraddirsi?'" The painter-narrator's reply marks the end of the dialogue between the two: "'Perché lei mi contraddice, perché mi contraddice il suo Dio"' (p. 106): his exposure to the contradictions of the fanatical Christian faith of don Gaetano leads him to reassert his own faith in reason, a process for which his unorthodox reading of pensiero 462 provides authority: 'Tutte queste contraddizioni, che sembravano maggiormente allontanarmi dalla conoscenza di una religione, mi han condotto più presto alla religione vera'. In the Pensées, Pascal attempts to provide rational proof for Christian dogmas, such as the concept of original sin. In his Remarques sur les Pensées de Pascal, in the Lettres Philosophiques XXV (1734), Voltaire criticizes this process which aims to oblige all men of

reason to concur with the doctrines of the Church and favours intolerance. He draws a distinction between the respective roles of faith and reason, and implies that to mingle the two is to risk losing sight of the truth. It could be argued, however, that Voltaire's insistence on reason as a guide is just as fanatical as the faith which he opposes. In much the same way, the painter-narrator's exaltation of reason is, as JoAnn Cannon points out, 'a kind of fanaticism, as inquisitorial as any form of absolutism' (Cannon, p. 290).

The reader of Todo modo is led to believe that the painter-narrator's Kantian 'atto di libertà' (pp. 3-5) consists in the murder of don Gaetano, apparently without a motive, at least in the eyes of Scalambri, the investigating magistrate, who, in the name of common sense, refuses to believe the narrator when he openly confesses (p. 122). (As we have already seen, however, the solution to the crime has taken second place in Sciascia's works to the analysis of the context in which it is committed.) The narrator's conversations with don Gaetano reveal to the reader a motive for this apparently gratuitous act (69), namely the priest's certainty of the triumph of the Church over rationalism and the painter-narrator's horror at this:

'Il secolo diciottesimo ci ha fatto perdere il senno, il ventesimo ce lo farà riguadagnare. Ma che dico, ce lo farà riguadagnare? Sarà finalmente la vittoria, il trionfo.'

'La fine.'

'Dal suo punto di vista, sì: la fine... Ma sarà l'epoca, o almeno il principio dell'epoca più cristiana che il mondo può conoscere.' (p. 104)

The painter-narrator does, indeed, contemplate the idea of

electing himself as judge and giustiziere, or is forced to do so by those around him. He considers the possibility of destroying the web of corruption and carries out the destruction on a spider's web in the hotel grounds (p. 74). When he refers to christianity as 'il trionfo del male', don Gaetano objects to the use of the word male and says, "'Bisognerebbe decollare da queste parole"' (pp. 76-7): it would, however, be possible to ignore the connotation of beheading of the word decollare if the police inspector had not, in the scene immediately prior to the conversation between the priest and the painter-narrator, shared with the latter (and, in sharing it, expressed his opinion that the painter-narrator was of the same mind) his theory of wholesale decapitation as the only possible solution in the given circumstances (p. 74). In their final dialogue, don Gaetano seems almost to invoke "'il dolore, la morte"' as the 'baptism' he awaits (p. 103), and to second the painter-narrator's suggestion that "'bisogna dunque distruggere"' (p. 104).

The long quotation from Les Caves du Vatican with which the novel ends concerns the return of Anthime to rationalism after his mystical experience - a return which, significantly, brings with it the return of his pains. JoAnn Cannon provides an analysis of the relevance of Gide's sotie to Todo modo and points to the ambiguity of Anthime and of the 'enlightened hero' in Sciascia's novel (Cannon, pp. 288-91), in whom the author illustrates the dangers of isolation which must be recognized by whoever chooses his own reason as his moral authority: 'Mi ero così liberato di tante cose;

di troppe perché non mi sentissi, in quel momento, lontano della verità, dalla vita' (p. 26). Given his state of mind, it is not surprising that he is susceptible to the temptations of mysticism, which we see first in his 'nevrosi da trinità' (pp. 4-5). The painter-narrator in Todo modo, thinking back to the attraction of the mystery contained in the formulae of the Latin mass, reflects on how

tante cose in noi, che crediamo morte, stanno come in una valle del sonno: non amena, non ariostesca. E sul loro sonno la ragione deve sempre vigilare. O magari, a prova, qualche volta svegliarle e lasciare che da quella valle escano: ma perché se ne tornino giù mortificate e impotenti. (70)

His contact with don Gaetano, not altogether unlike him in intelligence and cynicism but who, in place of the painter-narrator's doubts, 'ha delle certezze' (p. 48), is a trial of his reason's vigilance and, if indeed he is the murderer of don Gaetano, he emerges from it convinced of the justice dictated by his reason: like Rogas/Cres, he has chosen his reason as the only possible measure of justice.

In Candido; ovvero, Un sogno fatto in Sicilia (1977), Sciascia uses Voltaire's conte philosophique as a model for a series of reflections on aspects of post-war Italian history, on communism and the PCI, and on the contradictions facing a left-wing intellectual at that time. As its Enlightenment origins suggest, Candido is also an examination of the sense of 'reason' as intended by the author: if in Il contesto and Todo modo Sciascia's heroes had come to assert their own reason over the logic of power, here the author re-opens the whole discussion of the meaning and validity of reason, although the picture which emerges

from this discussion does not diverge significantly from that presented in Sciascia's previous works.

Asked, in an interview published in May 1979, to say which of his works had been most autobiographical, Sciascia named Candido (71). While any such authorial statement must not, of course, be taken too literally, and while, in any case, it would still not be possible to identify the opinions of any one character with those of the author (Tom O'Neill demonstrates how, for example, in Todo modo, Sciascia puts his own considerations into the mouths of both the painter-narrator and his antagonist, don Gaetano (O'Neill, p. 217)), an examination of the rationalism of the novel's protagonist does reveal elements of the author's ideology which I have already had cause to comment on above.

In another interview, Sciascia had said this of his creation, Candido Munafò:

Attraverso questo moderno Candido ho voluto inventare una formula di felicità che consisterebbe nel 'coltivare' la propria testa piuttosto che il proprio giardino; di fidarsi più di quello che noi pensiamo, piuttosto di quello che gli altri pensano per noi. (72)

Sciascia thus declares openly his adherence to the enlightenment humanist ideal seen elsewhere in his works and in those of Brancati. This statement, however, far from providing a clear-cut definition of the author's ideas regarding 'reason', raises a number of questions to which there can, perhaps, be no certain answer. Indeed, the choice of the verb 'inventare' and the use of the conditional form 'consisterebbe' tend to imply a doubt as to whether such a formula does, or, for that matter, can exist. Furthermore,

the word 'più' suggests, on the author's part, some degree of distrust of his own reason, although this is by no means a recognition of the principle I have previously mentioned, of 'reason' itself being a socially-constructed ideology. Another question, and one which, in my analysis of Sciascia's works, has already arisen in various forms, involves the concept of 'felicità' referred to by the author: is this not, one asks oneself, a sense of satisfaction, a freedom from doubt similar to that previously criticized by Brancati, in the short story Felicità, for example, and by Sciascia himself, and is it not, therefore, inconsistent with the author's professed principles? As I have said, there are probably no completely satisfactory answers to these questions, but a closer analysis of Candido will help to define our margin of uncertainty.

Candido's rational process is described in classic enlightenment terms, as can be seen in the way he evaluates his father's life:

Osservando Concetta e a volte provocandola; ritenendo nella memoria e lavorandoci su tutto quello che il nonno, i parenti e i conoscenti dicevano di suo padre; riepilogando i ricordi che gli erano rimasti dei pomeriggi passati nello studio, sdraiato sul tappeto e nascosto dal divano; giustapponendo ogni elemento ... alla fine Candido arrivò a un'immagine che non era ancora giudizio né era così netta come noi la presentiamo: l'immagine di suo padre come quella di un uomo che tira il conto di tutta la sua vita e la somma gli viene giusta per tirarsi un colpo di pistola. (pp. 31-2; my italics)

This is clearly akin to the process which Sciascia himself claims to adopt in writing, and the reaction, too, of those around him is comparable: indeed, we are told that, despite the innocence of Candido's assessment of his father, the

image which, through this process, had taken shape in his mind, 'al generale, a Concetta e a tutti gli altri sarebbe apparsa generata dal più incredibile e mostruoso cinismo' (p. 32). Candido is, however, like his creator, fundamentally unperturbed by any such criticism: indeed, this is Sciascia's ironic way of, if not dismissing, at least coming to terms with the accusations of cynicism made against him.

Candido's rationalism is, from the very beginning, its own measure: he ignores the prejudices, the preconceptions and rules of society, of 'il giusto vivere' (p. 45), according to which the truth may be suppressed and an innocent man tried for murder (pp. 24-6), the past and the present, fascism and antifascism are one and the same thing (p. 42), the terms 'lealtà' and 'amore alla famiglia', and more importantly the concepts they represent, are interchangeable with another, 'omertà' (p. 45), and true 'legitimacy' is represented by

la somiglianza e quasi identità del figlio col padre, il vivere del figlio nelle regole del padre, il non tradire il padre ragione o torto che avesse (soprattutto, anzi, nel caso avesse torto). (p. 59)

His rationalism is, to put it another way, a means of living outside a society which celebrates 'irrational' values, 'un sogno di ragione dentro il sonno della ragione' (March 1979, in La palma va a nord, p. 166): the author presents it as such, fully aware that it is bound to prove unsatisfactory to political activists.

Reason, however, as represented by Candido, is not free of ambiguity. The character has a tendency to rationalize about his environment and about the people around him

'senz'alcun sentimento' (p. 39), to consider them like mathematical problems; 'e voleva risolverli, anche per liberarsene così come, risolvendoli, si liberava dei problemi che gli assegnavano a scuola' (p. 41). In the light of this statement, it is difficult not to sympathize with those of his relatives who consider him 'un mostro' (p. 27; p. 134). Candido tends, too, towards an abstract or fragmentary vision of reality, as indicated by the author's references to his view of things as parts of a kind of crossword (p. 19; even if the idea of 'le cose incrociate' implies an examination of the relationships between them, the concept of a crossword is nonetheless abstract), and his fascination for the pieces of the puzzle rather than for the whole (p. 31): again Sciascia seems to acknowledge possible criticism of his own rationalism.

Another, less explicit area of ambiguity is related to the nature of Candido's rationalism as a self-justifying ideology to which I have already referred above. When Candido succeeds in alienating his comrades in Turin, with his 'common sense' suggestion that, in the event of a coup d'état in Italy, the most obvious refuge for a socialist would be the Soviet Union, not France, as the majority of them, including Candido himself, spontaneously agreed, their hostility and distrust leaves him 'amareggiato e travagliato':

Finché una sera, tornando da una di quelle riunioni, Francesca disse, 'E se fossero soltanto degli imbecilli?' E fu il principio della liberazione, della guarigione. (p. 119)

This liberation or recovery from the 'illness' of self-

doubt, this summary dismissal of others' positions as 'irrational' implies a disturbing satisfaction with 'la propria testa', which, as an ideology, risks becoming self-contradictory: in the end, Candido risks becoming, in a different sense, like the others.

Sciascia chooses, at the end of the novel, to define Candido's rationalism, or rather to define what it is not. When don Antonio stops in front of the statue of Voltaire to pay homage to 'il nostro vero padre', paralleling his rationalism to his former priesthood by allusion to the Lord's Prayer, Candido refuses this lineage: "'Non ricominciamo coi padri", disse. Si sentiva figlio della fortuna; e felice' (p. 135). Once again we find a reference to the ambiguous idea of felicità and, this time, also to the 'irrational' concept of fortuna (73). We find an echo of Candido's rejection of Voltaire as a father in the interview with Sciascia published in La Repubblica in September 1980, referred to above (see note (7)):

Non voglio Voltaire come padre. Intanto dell'illuminismo mi ha sempre più interessato Diderot che Voltaire. Ma poi ecco, io non mi riconosco nel volterrianesimo che mi si attribuisce. (La palma va a nord, p. 267)

Indeed, Sciascia goes so far as to declare here that he is not an illuminista, preferring instead to identify himself with the satirical element of Brancati's writing. Given the importance of Voltaire throughout Sciascia's works, this statement should perhaps be taken, as much as anything, as a challenge to the type of facile labelling which, all too often, takes the place of careful reading and analysis of his works (74).

Candido certainly is a satirical work, and in the sense which Sciascia gives to the word:

La satira è complessa, è una commistione di tante cose. Voltaire, nella voce 'Critica' del suo dizionario, parla di quella critica 'che è parte della satira'. Io direi, alterando, che la satira è una forma di critica. La più immediata, la più diretta. E' lo specchio che fa vedere il naso storto. (La palma va a nord, p. 267)

The object of Sciascia's criticism in Candido is largely the communist environment in post-war Italy, but the author's critics, particularly those who are practising communists, would interpret the last sentence of the quotation above in such a way as to attribute the distortion to the mirror rather than to the nose. Sciascia was convinced, however, of his opinion that the PCI would have achieved more as a pure opposition party, to which he attributed 'la funzione più essenziale e più delicata dell'apparato democratico' (La Sicilia come metafora, p. 107), than it did by adopting a strategy which enabled it to exercise a degree of power in the name of the people's interests.

In this respect, let us look at the attitudes expressed or implied in the episode involving Candido's refusal to speculate on the land needed for the town's new hospital. He rejects the proposal that councillors and technicians guarantee, in exchange for a percentage of the price to be paid to him, that his land be chosen as the site for the hospital, and he offers instead to donate the land to the town: as a result, the land is declared unsuitable on obviously falsified technical grounds, but when Candido calls on the party to denounce the fact, he obtains no support, and is even criticized for his exhibitionism and

his challenge to the party's actions (pp. 86-9). Apart from the implication of moral and practical corruption within the party, rendered explicit by the 'contadino' who asks how it was that a similar proposal could be made to a known communist, the justification given by the party representatives for their decision not to appeal for a second opinion on the suitability of Candido's land is an appeal to 'realism' over 'idealism' which, from Sciascia's ethical position, is unacceptable:

Si sarebbe potuto, sì, fare appello ad altri tecnici, più bravi o meno interessati: ma col risultato di fermar tutto, e chissà quando la città avrebbe avuto il suo ospedale. 'Vogliamo uno scandalo o un ospedale?' fu domandato all'assemblea. (p. 89)

But Candido's is not a sterile opposition: he and one or two others are in favour of having both the hospital and the scandal, as though to say that moral principles and practical results are not mutually exclusive.

Sciascia was adamant in his condemnation of the PCI's surrender of its opposition role, not least in the years following the publication of Candido, when the communists acquiesced in the 'governo di solidarietà nazionale' in response to the crisis provoked by terrorist activities:

Mi riesce incomprensibile la tendenza del Partito comunista italiano a sbarazzarsi del compito dell'opposizione in nome di non si sa quale unità di tutte le forze costituzionali di fronte ai pericoli che minacciano l'economia e la democrazia, e dunque l'unità di tutte le forze che accettano la Costituzione e il metodo democratico: sono molte! (La Sicilia come metafora, pp. 106-7; author's italics)

If a simple identification of Candido's opinions with those of the author seems tempting, it is worth comparing,

too, don Antonio's occasional 'impennate di sinistrismo' and 'invettive contro il partito' with Sciascia's own conceptions of the role and responsibilities of the PCI, which, although not identical, do bear a striking resemblance to each other:

'Il partito della classe operaia! E, per di più, cioè per di meno, della classe operaia occupata! Come se la classe operaia occupata, appunto perché occupata, appunto perché non preoccupata, non sia suscettibile di corruzione se inserita, come di fatto è, in un tessuto corrotto... Soltanto dalla disoccupazione e dalla scuola, che è poi l'immensa anticamera della rivoluzione, può venire non dico la rivoluzione, ormai rimandata a data da non destinarsi, ma la forza per un vero, effettuale mutamento delle cose italiane... Ma di disoccupati e di studenti il partito non vuol saperne, e molto di più di quanto loro non vogliano saperne del partito'. (Candido, pp. 125-6)

Per i lavoratori che un'occupazione l'hanno, può darsi che un PCI che ricerca il compromesso storico sia conveniente. Il problema, per i partiti di sinistra, è costituito dai disoccupati, dal Sud, dai giovani. Per un PCI che non è all'opposizione, che ignora l'opposizione, che sono ormai i disoccupati, il Sud, i giovani? Altrettanti problemi da accantonare. Ma è insensato parlare soltanto di lavoratori 'occupati'; ci sono anche gli altri, con i quali bisogna fare i conti. (La Sicilia come metafora, p. 116)

Another point of contact between don Antonio and Sciascia is the sense they share of the contradictions which are inevitable and, in a certain sense, desirable in someone who continues to think for himself or herself. In La Sicilia come metafora Sciascia said this of himself

Di me come individuo, individuo che incidentalmente ha scritto dei libri, vorrei che si dicesse: 'Ha contraddetto e si è contraddetto', come a dire che sono stato vivo in mezzo a tante 'anime morte', a tanti che non contraddicevano e non si contraddicevano. (p. 88)

Again, on accepting the candidature of the Partito Radicale in 1979, Sciascia acknowledged that he was going against his

previous decision to remain a writer only, offering this statement as justification:

Ma un uomo vivo ha diritto alla contraddizione. Mi piacerebbe anzi che l'epigrafe sulla mia vita fosse semplicemente questa: 'Contraddisse e si contraddisse'. Una contraddizione, appunto, in nome della vita, in nome della speranza. (La palma va a nord, p. 177)

Don Antonio, in response to the doubts aroused in *Candido* by the many conflicting truths in his letters, offers this explanation:

'Un partito non può contenerle tutte: e difatti il Partito Comunista va trascogliendo le peggiori. Ma la sinistra e l'uomo di sinistra sì... Queste tante verità che debbono necessariamente stare assieme, costituiscono il dramma dell'uomo di sinistra e della sinistra. E il Partito Comunista deve tornare a viverle tutte, se non vuole uscire dalla sinistra'. (Candido, pp. 127-8)

It is true that don Antonio continues by drawing a parallel between this situation and that of the Catholic who must reconcile the truths of free will and predestination, and that he is unable to provide an answer to *Candido's* further doubt ('"E se l'insieme di tante verità fosse una grande menzogna?"' (Candido, p. 128)), but his comment seems to reaffirm the need to doubt even the products of one's own reason which, in *Candido*, seems, to some extent, to have disappeared.

In a note to the collection of short stories Il mare colore del vino (1973), Sciascia had made this statement:

In questi anni ho continuato per la mia strada, senza guardare né a destra né a sinistra (e cioè guardando a destra e a sinistra), senza incertezze, senza dubbi, senza crisi (e cioè con molte incertezze, con molti dubbi, con profonde crisi). (75)

In the complementary characters of Candido and don Antonio, it is possible to see these paradoxes.

It could be said that in Sciascia's later rational heroes, in Rogas/Cres, in the painter-narrator and in Candido/don Antonio, the author recognizes the ambiguous nature of his reason, which he described as 'una specie di "nevrosi da ragione", di una ragione che cammina sull'orlo della non ragione', and which, he claimed, was a result of his attempt to react against the dual tyrannies of Fascism and Sicilian society, 'una società doppiamente non giusta, doppiamente non libera, doppiamente non razionale... cercando dentro di me (e fuori di me soltanto nei libri) il modo e i mezzi. In solitudine' (La Sicilia come metafora, p. 5). In the light of this statement, it is possible to look back at my analysis of some of the characters in Sciascia's works, and to trace through them the development of the author's rationalism: one can see in the narrators of La zia d'America, of Il quarantotto and L'antimonio, for example, the solitude of the young Sciascia, resisting the irrational outside world, comforted only by the rational alternative of literature, and whose whole cultural experience suggested that collective actions were futile; in the 'heresies' of Di Blasi and Vella, of Bellodi, of Fra Diego La Matina and Assunta Frangipane, the defiant assertion of the justice born of reason; and so finally, in don Benito and the later heroes already mentioned, the deification of reason and, at the same time, the acknowledgement of the dangers of making one's own reason an absolute measure.

Candido was to be Sciascia's last work of fiction until the publication, in the last twelve months of his life, of Il cavaliere e la morte (1988) and Una storia semplice (1989). In the intervening period, he dedicated himself in particular to the interpretation of reality through historical reconstructions or racconti-inchieste, which, he stated, were guided by 'il senso e il senno dell'oggi' and which he addressed to 'chi delle cose di oggi ha ancora il senso (come dire "il senso del pericolo") e continua ad aver senno nel giudicarle' (76). The majority of these works reveal the narrator's touch in commanding the reader's attention while reconstructing the context of an enigma, but in later years, some of Sciascia's attempts to arrive at an historical overview through an analysis of events ignored by mainstream history had produced works which suffered from a degree of imbalance between the events being recounted and the author's moralizing (1912+1 (1986); Porte aperte (1987)).

Of Sciascia's many non-fiction works, the two books published immediately before and after Candido are of special interest to my discussion of the author's treatment of the themes of 'power' and 'reason', and for this reason I will include an analysis of these two works alongside that of Sciascia's narrative. Both I pugnatori (1976) and L'affaire Moro (1978) refer to aspects of the terrorist phenomenon which marked the history of Italy in the 1970s: in the former, Sciascia draws an analogy between the series of indiscriminate knife attacks which took place in Palermo in the years immediately following Unification and the

actions of anti-democratic forces in Italy a century later, while in the latter he presents his analysis of the events surrounding the kidnap and assassination by the Brigate rosse of the Christian Democrat leader, Aldo Moro, in the spring of 1978. In both works, the author offers his explanation of the logica del potere which characterized the situations described and determined their outcome.

Sciascia says in the postscript to I pugnalatori that he hopes to have written 'un racconto che sia chiaro a quante più persone è possibile, e che interessi. E che interessi, voglio dire, in rapporto alle cose di oggi' (pp. 94-5). In this wish, there is a declaration of the author's didactic intention, an intention which underlies much of the writing of this author who modelled his life on the principles of the secolo educatore, and which finds perhaps its most explicit expression here. Indeed, beginning with the epigraph from Boiardo's Orlando innamorato - 'Principio sì giolivo ben conduce' - Sciascia indicates clearly that in I pugnalatori he will attempt to demonstrate the continuity of post-Unification Italian history, or what he defined, as I have previously had cause to mention, 'l'eterna immutabilità dell'eterno fascismo italiano' (La Sicilia come metafora, p. 70).

In Sciascia's view (which, in this respect, is comparable to that of Pasolini), one of the constants in this history is a dominant ideology based solely on the exercise and retention of power, rather than on loyalty to any principle. This, he argues, provides a credible explanation of the 'doppio gioco' played by the Prince of Sant'Elia, in

preparing to assume control of a possible Bourbon restoration, at the same time as accepting the honours of the Savoyard kingdom which, nominally and financially, he had helped establish. In one of the frequent references to the relevance of the facts being recounted to the subsequent history of Italy, Sciascia compares this policy to that seen in the transition between fascism and anti-fascism eighty years later (p. 78). It is, however, in his analysis of the case of the pugnalatori as an early example of a strategia della tensione that Sciascia relates this experience to the one being lived in Italy at the time he was writing. The terror created by the actions of the pugnalatori and, by analogy, by the bomb in Piazza Fontana in Milan (12 December 1969), aimed to provoke a call for measures to re-establish order, a concept looked on by Sciascia with some scepticism:

Intramontabile simulacro, sempre o vagheggiato o rimpianto dagli italiani, e da quelli del sud particolarmente: l'ordine. Mai avuto: ma, per incredibile inganno, ricordato. C'era. Non c'è. Bisogna farlo tornare. Perciò i partiti d'ordine, gli uomini d'ordine: che possono farlo tornare. (77)

Another aspect of Italy's immutable history is, according to Sciascia, 'il vuoto della giustizia' (p. 59), and its substitution by a partial and irrational Justice. The attempt by the Procuratore Giacosa to apply the principle of equality before the law is rendered vain by the class solidarity and prejudice which protects the probable mandante, Senator Romualdo Trigona, Prince of Sant'Elia, while permitting the condemnation of the lowly executors of 'his' orders, in spite of the fact that the evidence against all of them is of equal weight (78). The profoundly

irrational nature of pentitismo is also explored here (pp. 18-9) and, in the light of the trial and sentencing (May 1990) of the ex-leaders of Lotta continua for the murder in 1979 of the police inspector, Luigi Calabresi, based almost entirely on the statements of the pentito, Leonardo Marino, Sciascia's criticism of this mechanism of the judiciary can be seen still to be relevant (79). Sciascia expresses his suspicion that, before being passed on to the investigating magistrates, the testimony of one of the informants in the case of the pugnalatori was first considered by the police, who carried out 'le correzioni, le omissioni e le aggiunte... ritenute opportune' (p. 35).

The theme of the manipulation of truth by il potere is, as shown, a recurring one in Sciascia's works: in one of the interviews previously referred to, Sciascia stated that 'non è la letteratura che è fantasia, ma la realtà così come essa è presa e sistemata dal potere' (La palma va a nord, p. 155 (February 1979)). This idea appears in L'affaire Moro in the following form:

Lasciata... alla letteratura la verità, la verità... sembrò generata dalla letteratura. Dagli uomini politici del potere, o al potere vicini, gli uomini di lettere... ne furono accusati. (80)

Sciascia alludes also to his own feeling at one point that, with Il contesto and Todo modo, he had to some extent generated the reality of Moro's tragedy.

In L'affaire Moro, Sciascia describes how, ironically, Moro's abduction had smoothed out the problems which still stood between the DC and the PCI up until that moment, in spite of the fact that, on that very same day (16 March

1978), Andreotti was to have announced the first Christian Democrat government supported by the communists.

Alla Camera dei deputati... l'assenza dell'onorevole Moro avrebbe rapidamente prodotto quel che la sua presenza difficoltosamente avrebbe conseguito: e cioè quell'acquietamento e quella concordia per cui il quarto governo presieduto dall'onorevole Andreotti veniva approvata senza discussione alcuna. (p. 26)

In the middle of these reflexions, we find that word 'concordia', which takes us back to the circolo of Regalpetra where the galantuomini are united solely by their interest in preserving their privilege.

Sciascia continues his discussion of how Moro's absence from political life became 'più produdente' than his presence, and, through an analysis of the positions assumed during the period Moro was held prisoner, and of the letters he wrote from the prigione del popolo together with the reactions they provoked, he shows how one effect of the abduction was to allow the rhetoric of power to reassert the myth of the State:

E' come se un moribondo si alzasse dal letto, balzasse ad attaccarsi al lampadario come Tarzan alle liane, si lanciasse alla finestra saltando, sano e guizzante, sulla strada. Lo Stato italiano è resuscitato. Lo Stato italiano è vivo, forte, sicuro e duro. Da un secolo, da più che un secolo, convive con la mafia siciliana, con la camorra napoletana, col banditismo sardo. Da trent'anni coltiva la corruzione e l'incompetenza, disperde il denaro pubblico in fiumi e rivoli di impunte malversazioni e frodi... Ma ora, di fronte a Moro prigioniero delle Brigate rosse, lo Stato italiano si leva forte e solenne. Chi osa dubitare della sua forza, della sua solennità? (p. 63)

Sciascia clearly implies that this is not a rhetorical question and that the answer is simply, any rational person. He argues that this myth of the existence of the State is

merely another instrument of those intent on retaining power for its own sake. Ironically, he suggests, Moro himself had belonged to those ranks which now closed against him:

Per il potere e del potere era vissuto fino alle nove del mattino di quel 16 marzo. Ha sperato di averne ancora: forse per tornare ad assumerlo pienamente, certamente per evitare di affrontare quella morte. Ma ora sa che l'hanno gli altri: ne riconosce negli altri il volto laido, stupido, feroce. Negli 'amici', nei 'fedelissimi delle ore liete': delle macabre, oscene ore liete del potere. (p. 110; author's italics)

Not surprisingly, the view of events presented by Sciascia in L'affaire Moro provoked fierce criticism of the author, and accusations once again of having abandoned the cause of justice. It would seem to this reader, however, that in Sciascia's interpretation of events, in his rejection of the rhetoric of power, with its aim of creating an atmosphere in which it could be seen as the champion of order, the author's concern for justice and liberty as he defined them were still evident: the problem, as ever, was that Sciascia's rational conceptions did not coincide with those of il potere.

As previously mentioned, L'affaire Moro marked the beginning of a long period in which Sciascia abandoned the novel as a form. Whatever the reasons for this, it is interesting to note that in the two short novels published in the last year of his life (81), Sciascia's writing regained some of the sense of proportion between the narrative and the characteristic digressions which had been lacking in some of his recent works, and the author's comments on the conflict between power and reason benefit from it.

Various aspects of Il cavaliere e la morte and Una storia semplice create the impression of a rewriting or a re-appraisal by Sciascia of some of his earlier works, and the value of these late works justifies the space dedicated here to them. In them, Sciascia made use once again of the detective novel as a form, adapting it to an analysis of the values and workings of power and reason in society, as he had previously done in Il giorno della civetta, in A ciascuno il suo and in Il contesto, for example. In his 'Breve storia del romanzo poliziesco' (1975), he attributed the commercial success of this genre to its value as a distraction from reality:

Il tempo non più portatore di pensiero o di pensieri, non più scandito da condizioni e condizionamenti, è come sommerso in una fluida e opaca corrente emotiva; e la mente diventa una specie di tabula rasa che passivamente registra tutti quei dati che soltanto la mente dell'investigatore sa e deve decifrare, trascegliere, coordinare e infine sommare e risolvere. (82)

The reader, by passively entrusting himself or herself to the investigator's superior rational powers, enters a state of 'assoluto riposo intellettuale' (Cruciverba, p. 217). The use Sciascia makes of the genre is paradoxical, in that it induces the reader to question the received view of reality and to examine the context of the crime: in a way, the investigation of the specific crime is subordinated to the analysis of the context of which it is a product, without, however, the narrative losing the tension typical of the form.

In addition to this return to a previously used narrative form, several elements of plot which had appeared in earlier

works recur here. Furthermore, a number of paratextual features similar to those accompanying the writer's previous books can also be found again in these last works (83). Many of Sciascia's novels are, for example, preceded by an epigraph which offers the reader an interpretation of the text, but which itself may, of course, be open to different interpretations: such is the case of Il giorno della civetta and A ciascuno il suo, for example, introduced by quotations from Shakespeare and Poe respectively. Other works are given subtitles such as Il contesto; Una parodia or Candido; ovvero, Un sogno fatto in Sicilia (1977) (84). Such subtitles tend to suggest ironically that the intention of the author is less serious than might otherwise be assumed, that these works are not really the bitter comments on society and politics they may otherwise have seemed. Il cavaliere e la morte presents the reader with both a subtitle and an epigraph which evoke fundamental aspects of Sciascia's writing, while the very title of Una storia semplice echoes the ironic subtitle of Conrad's The Secret Agent; A Simple Tale (1907) (85).

The idea that, in an irrational world governed by the values of power, a rational analysis and rejection of those values can only come from who is judged by society to be mad is recurrent in Sciascia's works, as I have shown, perhaps the best expression of it being the play, L'onorevole. This idea is evoked in the denomination, 'Sotie', given to Il cavaliere e la morte, which suggests a light-hearted tilt at the follies of society, and apparently minimizes its significance, in the same way that the authors of the original

soties had masked their invective behind this term: the sotie or sottie was a type of satirical play of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which took its name from the fact that its characters pretended to be sots, or fools (thus enjoying greater freedom to criticize society and political figures). The Grande Larousse encyclopédique (Paris, 1964) gives us a clue to the significance of the choice of this subtitle in relation to Sciascia's work in general, when it tells us that 'la sottie est fondée sur cette idée que ce monde est le royaume de la folie', and that the thirty or so surviving examples of this genre are characterized by social and political satire. When Sciascia's characters define as a kind of 'sotie' the political reality in which they find themselves trapped (Il cavaliere e la morte, p. 60), there is a direct juxtaposition of the concepts of 'power' and 'reason', in which the latter appears in its negative form, the irrational.

It should also be remembered that the subtitle 'Sotie' was given by Gide to some of his works, including Les Caves du Vatican (1922) from which Sciascia quoted extensively at the end of Todo modo. It is worth noting this ironic intervention by the author in Les Caves du Vatican, which establishes a bond between Gide and Sciascia in their view of writing as reality:

Il y a le roman, et il y a l'histoire. D'avisés critiques ont considéré le roman comme de l'histoire qui aurait pu être, l'histoire comme un roman qui avait eu lieu. Il faut bien reconnaître, en effet, que l'art du romancier souvent emporte la créance, comme l'événement parfois la défie. Hélas! certains sceptiques esprits nient le fait dès qu'il tranche sur l'ordinaire. Ce n'est pas pour eux que j'écris. (86)

This reference to verisimilitude finds a parallel in Il cavaliere e la morte when the Capo tells the Vice to abandon the line of investigation which sees in the attribution of the murder of Sandoz to the figli dell'ottantanove a screen for other motives:

'La sua è una linea romanzesca, da romanzo poliziesco diciamo classico, di quelli che i lettori, ormai smaliziati, arrivano a indovinare come va a finire dopo aver letto le prime venti pagine... Niente romanzo dunque'. (p. 34)

In Una storia semplice, too, the brigadiere receives the same warning from his immediate superior when, twenty pages into the novel, he puts forward the theory that they are dealing with a murder rather than a suicide: "'Non facciamo romanzi'" (p. 29). As I have demonstrated above, Sciascia shared Gide's faith in the power of the novelist to interpret reality in such a way as to overcome the prejudices of those who are too closely involved in that reality (87). The 'linea romanzesca' of the Vice is, of course, that which proves to be correct, and comes after little more than twenty pages or a quarter of the novel: as in Sciascia's earlier 'detective stories', the emphasis is not on finding a solution to the crime but on the way in which reason and justice are overcome by the machinations of power (88). Una storia semplice differs slightly from Il cavaliere e la morte in that, superficially at least, it follows more closely the conventions of the detective genre, with its denouement only in the last few pages, so that the 'romanzo' conceived by the brigadiere is not a complete solution to the crime, but rather a rational hypothesis which leads to

this and contrasts with the uncritical adoption by the questore of the line of suicide offered by the murderer.

The epigraph to Il cavaliere e la morte is also linked to the theme of truth, and, perhaps, to the idea of the written word as truth. Taken from one of Karen Blixen's Seven Gothic Tales (1934), it is somewhat obscure in its meaning and seems indeed to be an exhortation to an irrational course of action (the 'drowning' of reason in wine): 'Un vecchio vescovo danese, ricordo, mi disse una volta che ci sono molte vie per giungere alla verità, e che il Borgogna è una delle tante' (89). Beyond the suggestion of the expression 'in vino veritas', however, it reminds one, with its heretical tone, of abate Vella's consideration 'che il mondo della verità fosse questo: degli uomini vivi, della storia, dei libri' (Il Consiglio d'Egitto, p. 181). The idea of the role of the written word in analysing and extracting truth from reality can, indeed, be found in Il cavaliere e la morte and Una storia semplice. The Vice 'remembers' the offices shared in Rome with don Ciccio Ingravallo, the police inspector in Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana (1957), 'poiché gli pareva, tanta era la verità delle pagine di Gadda, di averlo conosciuto in quegli uffici e non in quelle pagine' (90). Along these lines, Sciascia adopted again in Il cavaliere e la morte a conceit seen previously in A ciascuno il suo, the conceit of the reality of the world of his novel versus the fantasy of the detective novel: 'Si sentiva come dentro uno di quei romanzi polizieschi il cui autore usa ed abusa, nei riguardi del lettore, di una slealtà grossolana' (91). The brigadiere

finds that his task of providing a written report hones his powers of observation and analysis:

Curiosamente, il fatto di dover scrivere delle cose che vedeva, la preoccupazione, l'angoscia quasi, dava alla sua mente una capacità di selezione, di scelta, di essenzialità per cui sensato ed acuto finiva con l'essere quel che poi nella rete dello scrivere restava. (Una storia semplice, p. 15)

A parallel can also be drawn between the brigadiere and the narrator of Il quarantotto, who, in the words previously quoted, had anticipated Vella's thought: 'Scrivere mi pare un modo di trovare consolazione e riposo; un modo di ritrovarmi, al di fuori delle contraddizioni della vita, finalmente in un destino di verità' (Il quarantotto, p. 110).

Always in Sciascia's writings, however, alongside the rational ideal of scrittura-verità, there is also the ominous presence of scrittura-inganno, the instrument with which power presents its version of the truth (92). In Il cavaliere e la morte and Una storia semplice, it is principally scrittura-inganno as represented by journalistic writing that Sciascia attacks, with the suggestion in the former that truth will be ever more at risk due to the increasing concentration of media control in the hands of a few magnates. The symbolic figure of il Grande Giornalista is described thus:

Dai suoi articoli, cui settimanalmente i moralisti di nessuna morale si abbeveravano, gli era venuta fama di duro, di implacabile; fama che molto serviva ad alzarne il prezzo, per chi si trovava nella necessità di comprare disattenzioni e silenzi. (Il cavaliere e la morte, p. 65)

This un pitying caricature comes from the pen of someone who had seen the world of journalism from the inside, but it

should not be forgotten that there are those who would accuse Sciascia himself of having been just such a hack (93). The rational Vice seeks to offend the journalist by asking him if he has ever heard of 'l'amore della verità', and takes delight in confirming his suspicions regarding the nature of the figli dell'ottantanove, knowing that the journalist is unable to publish such a truth, which would implicate those for whom he works (p. 66).

Sciascia also comments on the possible threat to the detachment of justice represented by the written word: the arresting vigile explains to the crowd that his prisoner is 'un presunto figlio dell'ottantanove', remembering, in recognition of the principle that a man is innocent until proved guilty, to include the adjective, 'che come ognuno sa è invece sinonimo, nel corrente linguaggio giornalistico, di colpevolezza certa' (pp. 63-64). At the moment of his death, the Vice thinks of the confusion, of the corruption of the truth, deliberate or otherwise, in the newspaper reports of his death:

Il gomito non lo sostenne più, ricadde. Vide il volto bello e quieto della signora Zorni animarsi di malizia; lo vide poi dissolversi, nella fine del tempo di cui stava varcando la soglia, nei titoli dei giornali dell'indomani: I figli dell'ottantanove colpiscono ancora. Ucciso il funzionario di polizia che sagacemente li braccava. (pp. 90-91; author's italics)

In Una storia semplice Sciascia made use of what, at first glance, seems to be exactly the same technique, with words and a pattern which deliberately resemble those of Il cavaliere e la morte:

Il brigadiere capì. Sul giornale che aveva davanti e che fingeva di leggere, le parole si agglomerarono, si

fusero, si sciolsero nel titolo che il commissario credeva di poter leggere nei giornali dell'indomani: Commissario di polizia uccide per errore un suo subalterno. (p. 59; author's italics)

'Che cretino!' disse il magistrato: ad elogio funebre del commissario. E poi: 'Ma caro questore, ma caro colonello, questo è troppo poco... Se provassimo a ribaltare questa storia nella considerazione che il brigadiere mente e che è lui il protagonista dei fatti di cui accusa il commissario?'...

E perciò sui giornali: Brigadiere uccide incidentalmente, mentre pulisce la pistola, il commissario capo della polizia giudiziaria. (pp. 63-4; author's italics)

The small but not unimportant difference is that, here, the reader is left with no doubts whatsoever as to the intention to misrepresent the truth, first, of the corrupt commissario as representative of criminal power, then, of the representatives of institutional power: in Sciascia's last tale, the word of 'power' is triumphant over that of 'reason', and this bleak conclusion is emphasized by the starkness of the verbless reporting phrase, 'E perciò sui giornali'.

It is also possible that the epigraph to Il cavaliere e la morte contains a reference to the struggle of the Vice against the pain caused by the cancer from which he suffers, and to the way he resists the temptation to counter this pain by using morphine, which, like the wine would dull his senses and his reason. Of his pain we are told that 'soltanto il pensare gli era nemico, con piccole, momentanee vittorie. Ma c'erano momenti, lunghi, interminabili, in cui cadeva appunto su ogni cosa, tutto deformava e oscurava' (Il cavaliere e la morte, p. 75). The Vice fights the violence of his pain with his rational powers, in much the same way that Di Blasi opposed his torturers with his reason (Il Consiglio d'Egitto, pp. 147-148 and 157-158), but there is

an added note of defeat in the former's struggle. His defeat at the hands of the hidden powers behind the figli dell'ottantanove can be seen as a parallel to the defeat of his reason by the cancer pains, suggesting a comparison of these forces within society to cancers within the organism. It is therefore significant that the name given to the visible representative of those forces is that of Aurispa, the protagonist of D'Annunzio's Trionfo della morte (1894) (94).

The Vice is a literary descendant of Hans Bärloch, the detective created by the Swiss writer, Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921-1990), who shared with Sciascia a constant concern with the theme of justice and who also used the 'detective novel' as a form for the discussion of metaphysical themes. Sciascia's penultimate novel contains many elements which demonstrate the author's familiarity with Dürrenmatt's novel Der Verdacht (95). Bärloch, struggles against an illness similar to that of the Vice and, in Il sospetto, chooses Dürer's cryptic Ritter, Tod und Teufel, 'Il cavaliere, la morte e il diavolo' (which gives Sciascia's novel its title) to decorate his hospital room. He is also the judge of the title of Dürrenmatt's earlier novel, Der Richter und sein Henker (96), and, as such bears a resemblance to some of Sciascia's characters, such as Rogas/Cres in Il contesto (1971) and the painter-narrator in Todo modo (1974), who, given the often irrational face presented by institutional justice, speculate on the possibility of a form of justice determined by 'reason'. The way in which the two writers juxtapose the logic on which traditional detective fiction

is based to an irrational universe where reason is subjugated to power and evil, and the illness and death of the two rational heroes, can be seen to reflect the sense of disorientation which is a characteristic of the post-structuralist condition.

'Ancora una volta voglio scandagliare scrupolosamente le possibilità che forse ancora restano alla giustizia', the epigraph to Una storia semplice, published just days before the author's death, contains a number of messages to the reader. The word 'scrupolosamente' reminds us of the ethical quality of all Sciascia's writings and actions, and informs us that, in our turn, we too must 'scandagliare scrupolosamente' this 'simple tale' in order to appreciate its density and complexity, while the 'forse' is Sciascia's final ambiguous offering to those who seek to label him either as 'pessimist' or 'optimist'. The insistence on the theme of justice and the phrase 'ancora una volta' suggest that the writer wished all his works to be seen as analyses of the roads left open to that product of reason, and refers the reader to another of Dürrenmatt's novels (97), in which the very meaning of 'justice' is questioned by the juxtaposition of the bureaucratic apparatus and the human concept which both go by that name, as indeed Sciascia's own works have frequently done, perhaps the fullest discussion of this dichotomy being in Rogas's confrontation with Riches's sophistry.

Institutional Justice comes under attack in Una storia semplice, in which, with a quip defined by the narrator as 'feroce', Professor Franzò dismisses the judiciary as a body

entirely estranged from the rational foundation on which it should be based. When the investigating magistrate suggests that his weakness in Italian as a student had not, in the end, damaged his career, thereby implicitly criticizing his old teacher's evaluation of him, Franzò replies: "'L'italiano non è l'italiano: è il ragionare... Con meno italiano, lei sarebbe forse ancora più in alto"' (Una storia semplice, p. 44). On the one hand there is the Professor, suffering from an illness which, like Sciascia's (therefore justifying a certain identification of his opinion with that of the author), necessitated 'la periodica e inalienabile dialisi, pena per giorni l'intossicata immobilità' (p. 30): on the other, the representative of institutional Justice, whose forte is in 'infallible' intuitions (and if, theoretically, his words - 'Difficilmente sbaglio, nelle mie intuizioni.' (p. 43) - admit the possibility of his being mistaken, it is clear that, in fact, he intends nothing of the kind). It is one such irrational deduction which leads to the final concealment of the truth.

Other representatives of the forces of Justice in Una storia semplice are shown in a similarly equivocal light: the questore and the colonel of the carabinieri are more concerned with inter-force rivalry than with the discovery of the truth, so that when the latter chooses the correct line of investigation, it is not the result of any rational process, but merely an automatic choice of the line contrasting with that taken by his opposite number in the police force (p. 24). When the two are forced by their superiors to work together, pooling their information, a

degree of effective collaboration is achieved in spite of their irrational resistance: 'Non riuscirono ad essere del tutto vaghi e insensati' (p. 34). The investigation is carried out with a show of scientific methods, but in fact the finger-printing is carried out 'un po' a casaccio' (p. 22): the brigadiere doubts the validity of the 'science' of the forensic experts, which, in his experience, serves to add confusion rather than illuminate (pp. 14-15). The reason which should illuminate Justice is lacking in its highest representatives and the reasoned report presented by the brigadiere at the beginning of the investigation into Roccella's death, a report 'che adombrava l'omicidio', serves only to irritate his superiors (p. 27): the choice of the verb adombrare, which suggests principally 'offuscare' or 'velare', but is used here with the meaning 'accennare appena' or 'esprimere velatamente' (98), is an expedient typical of Sciascia which shows how, given the fact that society is dominated by the values of power, the light of reason is forced into a subversive role. The word 'ombra', with a similarly positive connotation, occurs elsewhere in Una storia semplice and seems to refer to an idealized past:

Sulla scrivania c'erano un mazzo di chiavi, un vecchio calamaio di peltro, la fotografia, di una comitiva numerosa ed allegra, che almeno cinquant'anni prima era stata scattata in giardino: forse proprio lì fuori, quando intorno alla casa ci dovevano essere alberi d'armonia e d'ombra, ora soltanto seccume e sterpaglia. (p. 17)

There is also repetition of 'sterpi e seccumi' (p. 20), and 'seccumi' by itself (p. 40), which validates an interpretation of these terms as symbolic, perhaps of what is

irrational and unjust in society: it is probably not fortuitous that the father of the brigadiere died 'strapiombando da un alto ciliegio che stava rimondando dai seccumi' (p. 40), and in this detail there is a presage of the son's defeat at the hands of the irrational (99).

The consequence of the irrational face presented by institutional Justice is the alienation of the public from it, as remarked by Sciascia in many of his previous works and seen in Una storia semplice in the reaction of the taxi driver who turns back from his fare on seeing the police and carabinieri, even though his only 'crime' was unwittingly to have driven the victim to the scene of the murder (p. 27), and in the 'malavoglia' and 'apprensione', subsequently seen to have been entirely justified, of the Volvo driver who, although a chance and unwitting witness, is seized upon by the irrational representatives of Justice as a potential scapegoat (p. 37, p. 66). Such an observation is fundamental to an understanding of Sicilian history and society, but is equally pertinent to any society in which the administration of Justice is divorced from reason.

The two investigators in Sciascia's last works bear some resemblance to characters previously portrayed, but nonetheless differ from these and from each other, offering, therefore, an insight into some of the constants and variations in Sciascia's thinking over the years. The figure of the Vice is, for example, partly a combination of elements of some of Sciascia's earlier heroes. He is a policeman like Bellodi and Rogas, and shares many of their characteristics, especially those which single him out from

his colleagues. He believes in the exercise of his authority with respect for human dignity:

Odiava le abitudini della polizia di eseguire mandati di cattura, perquisizioni e anche sopralluoghi o visite informative, nelle prime ore del mattino e, più spesso, in piena notte; ma colleghi e sottoposti lo consideravano un piacere da non perdere, quando se ne aveva l'occasione anche minima, la giustificazione più vaga. (Il cavaliere e la morte, pp. 15-16)

He describes his sense of offending this dignity on carrying out an arrest, regardless of the necessity or justice of his action, or the type of person to be arrested (p. 82). His wide reading, like that of Rogas, is an element which permits a degree of identification with his creator and is not arid erudition but the foundation of his love of justice. When asked to explain why he became a policeman, the Vice tries to dismiss the question with the light-hearted answer "'le necessità della vita, il caso, la pigrizia"' (p. 45) or the cryptic, "'Forse, poiché il delitto ci appartiene, per saperne un po' di più"' (p. 47), but, at times, he says he manages to find "'una risposta alta, nobile, da tenere al do di petto"' (p. 45) and on one such occasion he tenders this explanation: "'Forse perché mi sono illuso che si potesse essere avvocati appunto facendo il poliziotto... Ma la consideri una battuta. Non è vero"' (p. 82). This explanation closely resembles the information given to the reader about Bellodi's background, already quoted above but repeated here for ease of comparison:

Faceva quello che in antico si diceva il mestiere delle armi, e in un corpo di polizia, con la fede di un uomo che ha partecipato a una rivoluzione e dalla rivoluzione ha visto sorgere la legge: e questa legge che assicurava libertà e giustizia, la legge della Repubblica, serviva e faceva rispettare. E se ancora portava la divisa, per

fortuite circostanze indossata, se non aveva lasciato il servizio per affrontare la professione di avvocato cui era destinato, era perché il mestiere di servire la legge della Repubblica, e di farla rispettare, diventava ogni giorno più difficile. (Il giorno della civetta, p. 29)

In the words used by the Vice, however, it is possible to detect a stronger note of disillusionment (100).

The investigator of Una storia semplice comes from a different mould. While still a rational hero of a kind, brigadiere Antonio Lagandara is markedly different from the other professional sleuths in Sciascia's narrative, which may suggest a change in the status of reason in Sciascia's last work. Reference is made to his 'non frequenti letture' and his lack of intimacy with the Italian language (p. 15): gone are the culture and disillusionment of Rogas and the Vice, and in their place are the candid aspiration of the brigadiere to a degree in law and a sincere respect for the education of the commissario which makes the discovery of his colleague's duplicity an even greater shock. Bellodi's ideal of serving the law born of the anti-fascist revolution is, to some extent, replaced in Lagandara by 'necessity' and 'chance' (the reasons previously offered tongue-in-cheek by the Vice as an explanation for his becoming a policeman), and, even if we are told that 'il mestiere lo appassionava e voleva perciò farvi carriera' (p. 40), Lagandara's motivation is less idealistic and closer to that of the large numbers of southern Italians who do in fact swell the ranks of the police and carabinieri. The brigadiere, with his humble origins, with his destiny determined by necessity and with his innocence and acquired ability to 'read' events, has more in common, perhaps, with the narrators of the three

stories of Gli zii di Sicilia narrated in the first person. He is of peasant stock, his father having been a potatore, and Sciascia seems to attribute a questionable sort of 'peasant wisdom' to him: in the scene leading up to the shoot-out between Lagandara and the commissario, we are told that 'l'atavico istinto contadino a diffidare, a vigilare, a sospettare, a prevedere il peggio e a riconoscerlo gli si era risvegliato fino al parossismo' (p. 59). In one of his earliest works, Sciascia had attributed to even the most ignorant of peasants the ability to recognize fundamental truths (L'antimonio, p. 206), but the comments here verge on idealization, which indicates, perhaps, the author's abandonment of attempts to define reason, and a retreat into the self-justifying ideology of common sense. Indeed, Lagandara's practical intelligence is most effectively demonstrated by his appeals to common sense which exasperate his superiors: in this respect, and given the fact that Don Quixote is a leitmotiv in Sciascia's works, he can claim a kinship to Sancho Panza, another peasant whose rational observations on reality were not always appreciated by his master, and, indeed, this habit of his, like that of Sancho, is described as 'il vizio d'intervenire' (Una storia semplice, p. 50).

Both the Vice and the brigadiere adhere to the classic model of the isolated investigator, even if the former finds confirmation of his suspicions in his dialogue with Rieti, and the latter, to some extent, an ally in Franzò. Significantly, the old Italian teacher, who, as I have suggested, represents to some extent the author's ideal of

reason, has no further part to play in the story after Lagandara has confided in him, and, indeed, has no practical course of action to propose, leaving the brigadiere 'smarrito, stravolto' (p. 56): in the end, it is in fact the arguments of power which prevail over the language of reason. It is possible to see in this detail, therefore, something of a recognition of the limits of reason in a society whose rules are dictated by power.

The theme of 'la Sicilia come metafora', present throughout Sciascia's work, re-emerges in these late novels. In Il giorno della civetta the policeman is a settentrionale working in Sicily; in Il contesto Rogas moves in a society which is and is not Sicily, which is and is not Italy. In Il cavaliere e la morte there is a return to a more concrete setting, to an industrial city in the north of Italy, tending to suggest that 'la linea della palma' (Il giorno della civetta, p. 115) has reached the Alps, and that the sicilianizzazione of Italian society defined in I pugnalatori (p. 67) is complete. In order to understand contemporary Italian society it is necessary to look to that model and, in Il cavaliere e la morte, the investigation is carried out by a rational hero from Sicily: the ability of the Vice to understand is due not to a question of race, as might seem to be suggested, but rather to his ability to see in the degeneration of society at national level, the similarities to the Sicilian archetype. The action is set in a precise moment in time, January 1989, a moment in the future destined to become the present within weeks of publication. This choice suggests the actuality of the content of

Il cavaliere e la morte and of Sciascia's analysis of the power system in Italy. The publication of Il cavaliere e la morte came at a time when the discussion of the anni di piombo was as heated as ever, and the failure of the judiciary to provide satisfactory solutions to the terrorist crimes of the seventies and early eighties featured strongly in the press.

In Una storia semplice, too, we have a concrete setting and precise dates: the story, like Il giorno della civetta, takes place in the Sicilian interior, but some thirty years later, in March 1989. This fact is significant in that it underlines the transformation undergone by the mafia and organized crime in this period: from the mafia of tangenti and appalti, with its 'friends' in the political system, as portrayed in Il giorno della civetta, to an organization devoted to the large-scale production and distribution of drugs in Una storia semplice, perhaps no longer having such widespread and direct links with the political world, but nonetheless interwoven with the fabric of society.

As in Il contesto, the rational hero of Il cavaliere e la morte is not only defeated, but is also removed from the investigation by a bullet, again with the implication that it is a bullet of the secret services, rather than a terrorist bullet as is officially claimed. The defeat of Rogas and of the Vice is not so much in their physical elimination, however, but rather, as we have already seen, in the lies concerning their deaths diffused by the media, while in Una storia semplice, even if the brigadiere succeeds in killing his would-be killer, his defeat comes at

the hands of the institutional powers he represents, and is represented by Sciascia in the distorted version of the facts reported by the newspapers.

Il cavaliere e la morte, with its complex discussion of the nature of power which, to some extent, can be seen as a synthesis of Sciascia's ideas on the subject, merits further analysis.

Rogas's 'crime' was to have discovered a planned coup d'état and to have attempted to warn the opposition leader, Amar, reflecting the atmosphere of the period in which Il contesto was published (1971). The discovery made by the Vice is that of the schizophrenia of the power system in society, presented as an established fact and is, perhaps, an indication of the extent of Sciascia's cynicism regarding the subject. In the discussion between the Vice and Rieti, it is the latter who provides the analysis of the forces of power in society from the point of view of 'un verme dello stesso formaggio' (101), but we already know that, notwithstanding the equivocal light in which he is shown, Rieti shares the other's 'senso del pericolo' regarding the political situation, and subjects events to the same kind of rational analysis:

Sempre così, con Rieti. d'accordo nella valutazione dei fatti, nell'interpretarli, nel vederne l'origine e il fine... Era come se nella loro mente ci fossero gli stessi circuiti, gli stessi processi logici. Computer della diffidenza, del sospetto, del pessimismo. (Il cavaliere e la morte, p. 56)

Sciascia suggests that these characteristics are typical of both Sicilians and Jews by virtue of their natural energy (thereby refuting don Fabrizio's claim that the greatest sin

from the point of view of a Sicilian is il fare (Il Gattopardo, p. 161)), and of the experiences they have in common as persecuted and suspected races. This theory leaves some doubts in the reader's mind, as does any theory based on race, but it is one possible explanation of the pessimism and of the proclivity to doubt which characterize the works of Sicilian writers from vastly different backgrounds, such as De Roberto, Brancati, and Sciascia himself (102). At the same time, by analogy with the Nazi use of the Jews as scapegoats for national problems, it perhaps warns against the facile attribution to the Sicilians of blame for all of Italy's problems.

Rieti's analysis of modern, industrial society, ironically minimized as "'spicciola filosofia"' (103), indicates the co-existence and interdependence of two forms of power: the first is that represented by political and economic institutions, and is that which is visible; the second moves in parallel with the first, but below the surface of the water, and can be interpreted as the indefinable and unidentifiable elements behind any form of strategia della tensione, whether it be in the form of terrorism or mafia.

'C'è un potere visibile, nominabile, enumerabile; e ce n'è un altro, non enumerabile, senza nome, senza nomi, che nuota sott'acqua. Quello visibile combatte quello sott'acqua, e specialmente nei momenti in cui si permette di affiorare gagliardamente, e cioè violentemente e sanguinosamente: ma il fatto è che ne ha bisogno'. (Il cavaliere e la morte, pp. 59-60)

Paradoxically, while apparently undermining the institutional power, the concealed power creates an atmosphere in

which the former is reinforced: '"La sicurezza del potere si fonda sull'insicurezza dei cittadini"' (104). Rieti juxtaposes the themes of 'power' and 'reason', warning that there is an irrational element ('"della stupidità, della pura stupidità"' (p. 59)) on the side of il potere, which must be taken into consideration in order to explain the otherwise inexplicable paradox of the fact that, while dependent on the atmosphere of fear created by its hidden counterpart, the institutional power cannot itself be immune from this fear. The creation of the figli dell'ottantanove by the attribution of Sandoz's murder to them serves to consolidate the position of Aurispa's faction, but there is, of course, the risk that someone, acting in the name of the revolution evoked, could choose one of those responsible as the next victim. This, then, is the situation which the Vice defines as a sotie (105).

In addition to examining Sciascia's earlier narrative, it is well worth reading, in parallel with Il cavaliere e la morte, Sciascia's comments published in the Italian press, many of which I have previously had cause to quote, as they offer interesting insights into the thinking behind this analysis of the power system in Italy. In particular, those articles and interviews subsequently collected in La palma va a nord (1980), dating from the late 1970s, when the Brigate rosse were at their most active, show how certain elements of this description remained constant over the last decade of Sciascia's life and, at the same time, reveal an increasing scepticism regarding the actual state of the relationship between power and reason.

Ideas like those of Rieti concerning the nature of power can be found in La palma va a nord, frequently expressed in noticeably similar terms. In the interview given to Le Monde in February 1979 from which I have previously quoted (La palma va a nord, pp. 155-162), Sciascia stated that an analogy between il potere and the mafia will gain validity, 'nella misura in cui il potere diventerà invisibile e invulnerabile, con l'impossibilità di localizzarlo e riconoscerlo,' (p. 157), while, in an article originally published in L'Espresso in April 1980 (La palma va a nord, pp. 239-240), he commented controversially on the failure of every Italian government, except that of Mussolini, to confront the mafia, and accused these governments of having seen it, not in terms of a subversive force in society, 'ma piuttosto come sistema parallelo o speculare rispetto all'altro, e all'altro connivente o addirittura integrato' (p. 239) in which one can see a condemnation of the exploitation of the system of electoral clientelismo, originating in Sicily with its feudal heritage, but now existing to varying degrees throughout Italy. In April 1978, Sciascia wrote in Panorama (La palma va a nord, pp. 28-32) that terrorism provided the excuse for measures intended to restore public order, but that the price to be paid for this was the eventual loss of liberty and dignity, 'un più vero e profondo disordine che corrode anche le menti più lucide e le coscienze più nette' (p. 31), in which comment the antagonism between power and reason is clearly shown. Ten years later, in Il cavaliere e la morte, Sciascia presented as an established fact a mafia-style power system, and

contemplated the wilful and calculated invention of a terrorist organization by the forces of capital as a means of consolidating their control over society. The thesis was not new, having been aired by Sciascia and ascribed by him to the 'coscienza popolare' in his analysis of the events surrounding the kidnap and assassination of Aldo Moro: 'Come la mafia si fonda ed è parte di una certa gestione del potere, così le Brigate rosse' (L'affaire Moro, p. 129).

In La Sicilia come metafora Sciascia defined il potere as 'non già alcunché di diabolico, ma di ottuso e avversario della vera libertà dell'uomo' (pp. 116-117), although this statement conflicts to some extent with the diabolical nature of don Gaetano, the padre spirituale of the assembled potenti in Todo modo. The idea of ottusità recurs in Il cavaliere e la morte in the form of the stupidity which Rieti attributes to il potere, while the Devil in Dürer's engraving 'Il cavaliere, la morte e il diavolo' which gives the novel its title is seen as 'talmente stanco da lasciar tutto agli uomini, che sapevano fare meglio di lui' (Il cavaliere e la morte, p. 70). While in 1979 Sciascia claimed that one of the aims of the Radical Party was to break 'l'equivalenza tra il potere, la scienza e la morte' which was threatening to establish itself in the world (La palma va a nord, p. 178), his view in Il cavaliere e la morte was that this identification between the now diabolical manipulators of power, '"quelli che, spargendo l'insicurezza, si credono sicuri"' (Il cavaliere e la morte, p. 60), had now become fact:

Cristo? Savonarola? Ma no, ma no. Dentro la sua corazza forse altro Dürer non aveva messo che la vera morte, il

vero diavolo: ed era la vita che si credeva in sé sicura: per quell'armatura, per quelle armi. (p. 70)

During the period in which the Brigate rosse were most active, Sciascia incurred the wrath of orthodox communists by attributing part of the blame for the spread of terrorism to the PCI's having abandoned its opposition role in its quest for a share in the administration of power. This, in Sciascia's view, created 'una desertificazione ideologica e ideale' as portrayed in Il contesto, but which, at that time was only just beginning (106). However, while condemning the terrorism of those years as a reactionary instrument, he stated his belief that, at least among the terrorists themselves, there was 'una intenzione rivoluzionaria' (La palma va a nord, p. 202 (May 1979)), describing them as 'gente che crede follemente in quello che fa' (La palma va a nord, p. 20 (March 1978)) and that is, that they believed they were legitimately occupying the space vacated by the PCI.

The view presented by Sciascia in Il cavaliere e la morte is far more cynical, in that the figli dell'ottantanove are shown to be the product of a shrewd calculation on the part of the reactionary forces who, in the long run, stand to gain from what only appears to be a threat to the established order. The murder of Sandoz by unknown assassins in the control of Aurispa and his unnamed associates, and the judicious revelation of the threats previously received by the victim from the figli dell'ottantanove, immediately given publicity by the media, are calculated to create from nothing, '"per mitomania, per noia, magari per vocazione a

conspirare e a delinquere"" (p. 37), just such an 'organization', which punctually and obligingly materializes. The denomination figli dell'ottantanove itself is offered as an ironic tribute to the French Revolution as the banner round which disillusioned revolutionaries can rally (107). The aspiring terrorists of Il cavaliere e la morte, as described by the Vice and by Rieti, are products of the ideological vacuum, the beginning of which Sciascia had described in Il contesto, orphans of a now extinct revolutionary tradition:

'Dove vanno a sbattere questi poveri disgraziati, questi poveri sprovveduti che vogliono ancora credere in qualcosa dopo Chruščëv, dopo Mao, dopo Fidel Castro e ora con Gorbačëv?' (108)

As such they are prone to manipulation by the forces represented by Aurispa. Perhaps, in Rieti's analysis of the manipulation in progress, one can see Sciascia's embittered prediction of the nature of the bicentenary celebrations:

'Un'offa... rimessa nel forno dopo duecent'anni, soffice, fragrante di celebrazioni, riscoperte, rivalutazioni: e dentro la solita cote, che vi si spezzino i denti'. (p. 56)

In the postscript to Il contesto, Sciascia had explained the labelling of this work as a parody, 'travestimento comico di un'opera seria che ho pensato ma non tentato di scrivere, utilizzazione paradossale di una tecnica e di determinati clichés', and described the novel as substantially 'un apologo sul potere nel mondo, sul potere che sempre più degrada nella impenetrabile forma di una concatenazione che approssimativamente possiamo dire mafiosa' (Il contesto, pp. 121-122). If one acknowledges in Sciascia's

satirical portrait of a power system governed by cynicism a reflection of the society in which it was written, Il cavaliere e la morte could, despite its subtitle, be seen as that 'opera seria'.

The death of Leonardo Sciascia in November 1989 marked the beginning of a process of integration of the author into the establishment. Politicians and journalists, even those who, during his life, had been his most bitter critics or had been severely criticized by the writer, pronounced conciliatory words, absolving him of his 'sin' of having always conducted his relationship with 'power' according to a strict ethic and, at the same time, absolving themselves of the moral contradictions created by their own rapport with the system, contradictions which, as I have demonstrated, Sciascia had devoted much of his activity as a writer to condemning, earning himself both resentment and respect. In his writing he had constantly pointed to the divergence of the interests of 'power' from rational ideals of justice and liberty. With the author no longer able to defend himself, however, he and his works became the common property of anyone who chose to associate themselves with the kind of rationalism which he had come to represent, to the extent that, speaking in Messina in March 1990, the President of the Republic, Francesco Cossiga, who, at the time of the Moro kidnap, had been Minister of the Interior of a State from which Sciascia had distanced himself, felt authorized to use the by now fashionable expression, 'la Sicilia di Sciascia', to evoke the idea of a population loyal to his own conception of the State. A critical

analysis of Sciascia's last works provides further confirmation of his unshakeable opinion regarding the relationship between 'power' and 'reason', or rather, on their unrelatedness, thereby countering this process of 'rehabilitation'.

NOTES

(1) See, for example, Sebastiano Addamo, 'L'illuminismo di Leonardo Sciascia', in Vittorini e la narrativa siciliana contemporanea, Caltanissetta-Rome, 1962, pp. 139-62; G. C. Prandstraller, 'Il neo-illuminismo di Sciascia', Comunità, 19 (March-April 1964), 88-92; V. De Martinis, 'L'illuminismo nella narrativa di Leonardo Sciascia', La civiltà cattolica, 4 September 1966, pp. 391-401 (which presents the Jesuit reaction to Sciascia's writing); and, Carlo Salinari, 'Per una narrativa della ragione: Leonardo Sciascia', in Preludio e fine del realismo in Italia, Naples, 1967, pp. 391-401. There are, of course, different opinions on Sciascia's position: Giovanna Ghetti Abruzzi, for example, questions Sciascia's illuminismo, preferring to define it 'razionalismo morale' (Giovanna Ghetti Abruzzi, Leonardo Sciascia e la Sicilia, Rome, 1974: Chapter 7 'Fra razionalismo e pessimismo', pp. 69-80 (p. 76)).

(2) Sciascia had previously published Favole della dittatura, Rome, 1950, a collection of poems, La Sicilia, il suo cuore, Rome, 1952, and the essay, Pirandello e il pirandellismo, Caltanissetta, 1953. The first two were later republished with a French translation by Jean-Noël Schifano, and references are to this edition (Fables de la dictature. La Sicile, son coeur, Aix-en-Provence, 1980).

(3) p. 11: this and all subsequent references are to the sixth edition, Bari, 1982, of Le parrocchie di Regalpetra. Morte dell'Inquisitore (1967).

(4) La Sicilia come metafora (1979), Milan, 1984, pp. 9-10.

(5) 'Dall'osservatorio di Racalmuto', in Lotta continua (October 1978), now in La palma va a nord (1980), Milan, 1982, pp. 99-113 (p. 112).

(6) Giovanni Giuga, '"Non obbedisco a niente e a nessuno". Visita a Leonardo Sciascia', in La Fiera Letteraria (14 July 1974), 12-14. Sciascia's affinity to Brancati was evident in the Favole della dittatura. As has been suggested, the choice of the epigraphs to this work reflects a rejection of dictatorships of both the Right and the Left, similar to that of Brancati in the years between the end of the Second World War and his death. More importantly, Sciascia's observations on the nature of dictatorships which appear in the various fables were similar to those already encountered in an examination of Brancati's work: the monkeys' behaviour is a representation of the stupidity and conformism which typifies society under a dictatorship (p. 18), and the parallel with Brancati's work is rendered explicit by Sciascia's use of the terms 'chiuso' and 'rigido' to describe the uniformed men the monkeys envy (p. 64). In the fable of the ass (p. 22) there is a portrayal of nostalgia for the dictatorship, and in the dog (p. 38), an example of the habit of servility. Almost thirty years later, in a discussion of what he saw as the beginning of the decline of the marxist-leninist myth, Sciascia sought to explain the

reluctance to abandon dictatorships, whether institutional or ideological, and, in a direct reference to Brancati, attributed this to the way in which totalitarianism relieves the individual of the burden of thought, in such a way as to make it difficult to return to a true democracy based on thought: 'Stiamo per evadere da moltissime prigioni, però molti non sanno che fare della libertà: vogliono restare in prigione o entrare in un'altra' ('Il cuore dello stato italiano non esiste più, e nemmeno il cervello', La Stampa (February 1979), now in La palma va a nord, pp. 155-62 (p. 160): a similar idea can be found in Thomas Mann's Mario und der Zauberer, set in Fascist Italy and already referred to in connexion with Brancati's writing). Other themes dear to Brancati are recognizable in the fables of the lion (p. 60: ducismo), and of the captured rat, who 'quieto, pieno di disgusto e di noia', looks on his captor with compassion (p. 44).

(7) See La palma va a nord, p. 112, quoted below, and 'I panni di Voltaire', La Repubblica (September 1980), now in La palma va a nord, pp. 265-9: '[In La morte di Stalin, c'è comprensione] per il personaggio, non per il contesto. Capisco lo stalinista, non lo stalinismo' (p. 268).

(8) See Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice, especially Chapter 1, 'Criticism and common sense', pp. 1-36.

(9) Sciascia discusses the similarities between the Inquisition, Stalinism and the Brigate rosse in La Sicilia come metafora, pp. 65-6.

(10) The concept of a uniform tax on households, irrespective of the owners' relative wealth or poverty, is, of course, unimaginable in a rational society.

(11) References are to the individual story and to the pages in the eighth edition of the collection in the 'Nuovi Coralli' series, Turin, 1980.

(12) For an analysis of this myth as it is portrayed in literature regarding the mezzogiorno, see my article 'The Popular Myth of America in Southern Literature', Journal of the Association of Teachers of Italian, no. 39 (Summer 1983), 3-13.

(13) Giuseppe Bonaviri's novel, Il fiume di pietra (1964) develops around similar characters and the same moment in Sicily's history.

(14) 'Nel corso di una vita', Mondo operaio (December 1978), now in La palma va a nord, pp. 129-47 (p. 132).

(15) Samonà was to report Tomasi di Lampedusa's comment that I Viceré was a view of the aristocracy from the servants' quarters (G. P. Samonà, Il Gattopardo. I racconti. Lampedusa, Florence, 1974, p. 453), which, indeed, Il quarantotto is.

(16) Points of contact between Il quarantotto and De Roberto's work in general include the transformation into a literary theme of the daily recitation of the rosary (and surely it is not incidental that Sciascia's narrator describes the recitation of the rosary as sleep-inducing ('il sonno della ragione')), subsequently picked up again by Tomasi di Lampedusa, and the use of phrases in dialect (Neapolitan soldiers, p. 105; like Tomasi di Lampedusa's Ferdinando), a technique of which De Roberto was a pioneer (cf. La paura and La posta in La 'Cocotte') but which, by Sciascia's time had been used by others such as Gadda and Pasolini. Gadda's use of dialect in, for example, Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana (1957), is, however, much bolder, more complete, while the odd phrase interjected in an 'Italian' prose is common to De Roberto, Sciascia and Tomasi di Lampedusa.

(17) The lines quoted as epigraph, from Macleish's poem Conquistador, preannounce the absurdity of this intervention, referring to problems in Spain/Sicily, 'trouble enough without new lands to be conquered'.

(18) In Il Gattopardo, Padre Pirrone encounters a similar reaction in the herbalist, don Pietrino (Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, Il Gattopardo, fifty-fifth edition, Milan, 1990, pp. 175-80).

(19) See, for example, Nero su nero, Turin, 1979, p. 3.

(20) In contrast, another Sicilian writer, Elio Vittorini (1908-66), and Italo Calvino (1923-85), a contemporary of Sciascia's, both of whom participated in the Resistance, were advocates of collective action, although both were also to experience difficulties in their personal relationships with the PCI, and Calvino was later to seek a form of 'intellectual refuge' in the '-isms' of modern thought.

(21) Il giorno della civetta, pp. 110-11: this and subsequent references are to the twelfth edition in the 'Nuovi Coralli' series, Turin, 1980. Cf. Denis Mack Smith, Storia della Sicilia medievale e moderna, translated by Lucia Biocca Margheri, second edition, 3 vols, Bari, 1976, III, 737-8.

(22) See, for example, S. F. Romano, Storia della mafia, Milan, 1963; Emanuele Macaluso, La mafia e lo Stato, Rome, 1972.

(23) At the same time, however, the context from which the title and epigraph are taken calls upon men to fight for their ideals - a call which Bellodi answers:

'And he that will not fight for such a hope
Go home to bed and, like the owl by day,
If he arise, be mock'd and wonder'd at.'

(Shakespeare, Henry VI, V. 4. 55-7)

(24) Few reporters, even in respected newspapers such as La Repubblica, can resist the temptation to colour their

articles and simple reports concerning the mafia with soprannomi and other jargon supposedly belonging to the mafia, while it is, of course, the most sensational stories which sell the most copies, although this is a problem which afflicts all aspects of journalism.

(25) Lettre XXXVII - A Madame ***. A Reggio, en Calabre, le 15 avril 1806, in P. Courier, Oeuvres complètes, Paris, 1951, pp. 702-705. Joseph Bonaparte, brother of the Emperor Napoleon I, was pronounced King of Naples in 1806, but the Bourbons transferred their feudal court to Palermo, where, supported by the British, they held out against the French until able to return to Naples in 1815 (Kingdom of the Two Sicilies).

(26) Rosario Romeo, Il Risorgimento in Sicilia (1950), Bari, 1973.

(27) Domenico Scinà, Prospetto della storia letteraria della Sicilia nel secolo XVIII, Palermo, 1824-7, Chapter 4, 'Degli studi delle cose arabiche e del falso codice arabico'.

(28) F. M. Emanuele, Marchese di Villabianca, Diarii di Palermo, in Biblioteca storica e letteraria di Sicilia, edited by G. Di Marzo, Palermo, 1886, XIX.

(29) Subsequently ordered and commented on by Adelaide Baviera Albanese, in Nuovi Quaderni del Meridione, 4 (1963); this article, together with Scinà's account, 'Del falso codice arabo', can now be found together in D. Scinà and A. Baviera Albanese, L'arabica impostura, Palermo, 1978, and all references to the two works are to the pages of this edition. In her article, Baviera Albanese examines the evidence to support the hypothesis that, as Vella was to claim during his trial, the invention of the false codex was instigated by Francesco Carelli, whose authority as Secretary to the viceroy Caramanico was roughly equivalent to that of a prime minister (L'arabica impostura, p. 131), but to whom Sciascia makes only passing reference (Il Consiglio d'Egitto, p. 81: this and subsequent references are to the seventh edition in the 'Nuovi Coralli' series, Turin, 1982). In a note, she quotes Villabianca's report of the rumour that "'il Vella fosse stato indotto a fingere quel libro dal segretario del governo d. Francesco Carelli il quale come nemico giurato dei baroni siciliani volea con un colpo abatterli e farsi merito presso la Corte"' (L'arabica impostura, p. 153): Villabianca, however, is hardly an impartial source.

(30) It is a matter for historians to decide whether, in reality, Caracciolo's principal motive was a reaffirmation of the monarchy's authority, or a desire for a degree of social justice. While Sciascia's account places greater emphasis on the latter (and a similar judgement can be found in Giorgio Candeloro, Storia dell'Italia moderna, I (third edition, Milan, 1989), 155-6), it is probably more accurate to suggest that both elements influenced the viceroy in his actions, for if Caracciolo was a firm supporter of the

monarchy and by no means an advocate of an egalitarian society, and if, as has been suggested, it was partly his undiplomatic and uncompromising character which made a clash with the local aristocracy inevitable, the targets of his attacks and the zeal with which he carried out his duties make it likely that he was, indeed, inspired to some extent by the Enlightenment ideal of justice.

(31) pp. 21-2. Sciascia, himself, expressed some regret about Caracciolo's irreversible action, but only because it rendered unsolvable the mystery of Fra Diego La Matina's heresy (Morte dell'Inquisitore).

(32) Il Consiglio d'Egitto, p. 42: De Judiciis causarum feudarium and De concessione feudi [Palermo], 1596; quoted by Romeo, p. 53, p. 67.

(33) Romeo, pp. 36-37, pp. 52-53, p. 67; Il Consiglio d'Egitto pp. 42-43.

(34) Vella's letter to the king in Part II reminds one of don Eugenio's letter seeking patronage for his archaeological work in I Vicerè.

(35) p. 28. In La Sicilia come metafora, Sciascia describes his own memory of a similar fetishism: 'La scoperta della scrittura, il piacere sensuale, fisico dello scrivere; l'amore agli strumenti dello scrivere: i quaderni, le matite, le penne, l'inchiostro' (p. 12).

(36) This 'impure' approach is typical of Sciascia's 'documentaries', such as I pugnalatori (1976) and L'affaire Moro (1978), which are examined below.

(37) While Sciascia was to define his own political impegno as a question of ethics, there is evidence to suggest a consciousness on his part of the ambiguity of terms such as 'moralismo'. Note, for example, Sciascia's inclusion in his 'diary', Nero su nero (1979), of the anecdote about the meeting after many years between an architect and his former schoolmate who, in the meantime, has become a 'pezzo grosso'. The architect jokingly refers to a rumour that his ex-companion has become a thief, but when the latter calmly asks him about himself and, in the same jovial tone as before, he replies that there are no such rumours about him, he is reproached on 'moral' grounds: "'Allora sei tu il vero ladro: rubi ai tuoi bambini... Perché i miei bambini qualche milione ce l'hanno, di franchi svizzeri e nelle banche svizzere. E i tuoi?'" (Nero su nero, pp. 7-8). In his account of this corruption of conventional morals, Sciascia shows himself to be aware that these are not, in fact, absolute values, and that to a person operating in the discourse of a different ideology, in this case of 'la religione della famiglia', the apparently universal terminology of morality can signify totally different concepts.

(38) Epigraph p. 171, p. 177. Sciascia was to provide a fuller analysis of the corruption of Christian values in Sicily in the introduction to the photographer, Ferdinando

Scianna's book on Feste religiose in Sicilia, Bari, 1965, now in La corda pazza. Scrittori e cose della Sicilia, Turin, 1970), pp. 184-203.

(39) Published in 1976 together with two other works written for the theatre, Recitazione della controversia liparitana dedicata ad A.D. (1969) and I mafiosi (1976): references are to the fourth edition in the 'Nuovi Coralli' series, Turin, 1982.

(40) Cf. Giovanna Jackson, Leonardo Sciascia: 1956-1976. A Thematic and Structural Study, Ravenna, 1981, Chapter 2, 'Woman and Nature', pp. 31-53.

(41) Luigi Pirandello, Il berretto a sonagli, in Maschere nude, ninth edition, 2 vols, Milan, 1985, II, 355-405 (p. 404).

(42) The electoral reform (1952) according to which the party or coalition obtaining in excess of fifty percent of the votes in a general election would automatically win two thirds of the seats in the Camera dei deputati, and with which the DC and its coalition partners (PLI, PSDI and PRI) aimed to defend the new republic from 'extremists'. In the 1953 elections, the coalition failed in its aims by a tiny margin, and the legge truffa was repealed the following year. See Paul Ginsborg, Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra a oggi. Società e politica 1943-1988, translated by Marcello Flores and Sandro Perini, 2 vols, Turin, 1989, I, Chapter 5, paragraph 1, 'Le elezioni del 1953', pp. 188-92.

(43) Cf. Il Principe, XV: 'Io so che ciascuno confesserà che sarebbe laudabilissima cosa uno principe trovarsi di tutte le soprascritte qualità, quelle che sono tenute buone: ma, perché non si possono avere, né interamente osservare, per le condizioni umane che non lo consentono, li è necessario essere tanto prudente, che sappi fuggire l'infamia di quelle che li torrebbero lo stato, e da quelle che non gnene tolgano guardarsi, se elli è possibile; ma non possendo, vi si può con meno rispetto lasciare andare. Et etiam non si curi di incorrere nella fama di quelli vizii senza quali e' possa difficilmente salvare lo stato; perché, se si considerrà bene tutto, si troverrà qualche cosa che parrà virtù, e seguendola sarebbe la ruina sua, e qualcuna altra che parrà vizio, e seguendola ne riesce la securtà et il bene essere suo', Niccolò Machiavelli, Il Principe e Discorsi, edited by Sergio Bertelli, fourth edition, Milan, 1973, pp. 65-6.

(44) Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Don Chisciotte della Mancia, translated by Letizia Falzone, seventh edition, 2 vols, Milan, 1985, II, 919 (Part II, Chapter 74).

(45) In 'The Fall of the House of Usher' and Other Writings, Harmondsworth, 1986, pp. 189-224 (p. 194).

(46) Il Gattopardo, p. 41: cf. Leonardo Sciascia, 'Il Gattopardo' (1959), now in Pirandello e la Sicilia, second edition, Caltanissetta-Rome, 1968, pp. 147-59. A ciascuno il

suo (1966) was written during the period when it seemed to the author that the PSI would merely be absorbed by the DC without achieving anything in exchange for its support of the government, but he subsequently conceded that the socialists' participation had later brought about some reforms, perhaps the most important of which was the 'Statuto dei lavoratori' (1970) (La Sicilia come metafora, pp. 124-5 and La palma va a nord, p. 156; cf. Ginsborg, II, 344-403 (Chapter 8)).

(47) p. 53. A third possibility, and one which is supported by this intervention, is that the epigraph alludes to the way in which Sciascia parodies the detective genre in A ciascuno il suo. Sciascia's use of the form is discussed in detail below.

(48) The possibility that the figure of Laurana's mother is part of an 'irrational female principle' in Sciascia's work in general, and in A ciascuno il suo in particular, is one to which I intend to dedicate more attention than would be possible in the present study. Certainly, the author's comments on the form of matriarchy which existed in traditional Sicilian society are drastic and somewhat disturbing:

Molte disgrazie, molte tragedie del Sud, ci sono venute dalle donne, soprattutto quando diventano madri... Queste donne sono un elemento di violenza, di disonestà e di abuso di potere nella società meridionale...

La mia infanzia e la mia adolescenza sono state impregnate da questo sistema di potere. (La Sicilia come metafora, pp. 14-15)

At the same time, however, one can see in this statement how Sciascia's vision of the role of women in Sicilian society might be linked to his condemnation of other groups exercising and abusing power therein. In the mean time, I can only refer the reader to the chapter of Giovanna Jackson's Sciascia study already mentioned above (see note (40)).

(49) p. 86. The reference to the names Napoleone, Letizia, etc., is clearly an allusion to the Colajanni family (Napoleone and Letizia, but also Luigi and Benedetto). This raises the questions of whether don Benito's criticism of the communists 'in power' contains, by virtue of the juxtaposition, a specific reference to the Colajanni family with its long socialist tradition, and whether, in the same way, don Benito's disillusionment with the communist Peppino Testaquadra can be compared to some similar feeling of Sciascia's with respect to his old friend Pompeo Colajanni.

(50) I pugnalatori, third edition, Turin, 1976, p. 67.

(51) Similar ideas appear in Il cavaliere e la morte and are discussed below.

(52) 'I professionisti dell'antimafia', Corriere della sera (10 January 1987), now in Leonardo Sciascia, A futura

memoria (se la memoria ha un futuro), Milan, 1989, pp. 123-30.

(53) A ciascuno il suo is frequently referred to in terms which place the emphasis firmly on the novel's mafia element, while its 'message' is taken to be 'che non è vero nulla di quanto si va dicendo intorno al possibile rinnovamento della Sicilia, che è inutile affannarsi nel voler modificare, restaurare, o persino trasformare una condizione secolare che nella sua temperie congeniale di insularità sembra possedere le salde e tenaci radici dell'edera, di qualcosa che intenda morire e finire coi destini dell'uomo' (Walter Mauro, Leonardo Sciascia, Florence, 1970, p. 57; my italics).

(54) Doug Thompson, "'Per le lucciole scomparse": observations on Sciascia's concern with the language of political bankruptcy', Quinquereme, 7, no. 2 (July 1984), 182-98 (p. 183); cf. P. A. Allum, 'The South and National Politics, 1943-50', in The Rebirth of Italy, 1943-50, edited by S. J. Woolf, London, 1972, pp. 95-120. Claude Ambroise, in his otherwise perceptive study, wrongly attributes Brescianelli's words to Bellodi and, consequently, finds the statement difficult to reconcile with a character who is largely a spokesman for the author's rational ideals (Invito alla lettura di Sciascia, revised edition, Milan, 1985, pp. 101-2).

(55) The concept itself is similar to that contained in Goethe's comment written in Palermo in 1787: 'Italien ohne Sizilien macht gar kein Bild in der Seele: hier ist erst der Schlüssel zu allem' (Italienische Reise).

(56) Note to Il contesto, p. 122: this and all subsequent references are to the fifth edition in the 'Nuovi Coralli' series, Turin, 1979. References to Todo modo are to the sixth edition in the same series, Turin, 1980.

(57) Tom O'Neill, 'Sciascia's Todo modo: La Verité en Peinture', in Moving in measure. Essays in honour of Brian Moloney, edited by Judith Bryce and Doug Thompson, Hull, 1989, pp. 215-28 (p. 219).

(58) 'Riflessioni sull'Italia dopo i fatti del Cile', Rinascita (28 September, 5 and 9 October 1973), quoted in Ginsborg, II, 478.

(59) Claude Ambroise (op. cit., pp. 153-68), JoAnn Cannon and Tom O'Neill each offer clear analyses of some of the complexities of Todo modo, but all three critics tend to play down this element of the novel, perhaps with the feeling that to attribute too much importance to it would set limitations on the work. Cannon goes so far as to accept at face value Sciascia's statement that Il contesto is set in an imaginary country, and says that here 'the defeat of reason is no longer linked to a specific geographical or historical setting', while, referring to Todo modo, she says that the 'absence of the "here and now" lends to the novel an almost allegorical tone', by which, presumably, she

intends an allegory of purely abstract themes ('Todo modo and the enlightened hero of Leonardo Sciascia', Symposium, 35, no.4 (Winter 1981-1982), 282-91 (p. 283)).

(60) 'E la verità fu come la menzogna', L'Ora (March 1979), now in La palma va a nord, pp. 166-70 (p. 167).

(61) 'La realtà è divenuta finzione', Spirali (January 1979), now in La palma va a nord, pp. 148-51 (p. 149).

(62) 'Politica e etica', Tuttolibri (May 1979), now in La palma va a nord, p. 179.

(63) As Tom O'Neill points out, Voltaire and the principle of tolerance come under attack again in Todo modo, and in the same conversation quoted above.

(64) Michele Rago, 'Il contesto', L'Unità (15 December 1971), p. 3; Napoleone Colajanni, 'Dalla Sicilia alla metafisica', L'Unità (26 January 1972), p. 3; Renato Guttuso, 'Un caso non banale', L'Unità (1 February 1972), p. 3; Emanuele Macaluso, 'Il "contesto" della rassegnazione', L'Unità (5 February 1972), p. 3; Walter Pedullà, 'Pettegolezzi politico-morali', Avanti! (2 January 1972), p. 7.

(65) Sciascia's most explicit criticism of the PCI in this respect was in L'affaire Moro (1978), in which he condemned the move towards the compromesso storico and the communists' surrender of their opposition voice to the obscure concept of 'solidarietà nazionale' during the crisis provoked by terrorist activities. Sciascia was profoundly affected by the kidnap and murder of Moro and, perhaps even more so, by the face presented by the institutional powers on this occasion, and it should be noted that, subsequently, his creative output was much reduced: illness and a simple lack of creativity are other probable causes of Sciascia's relative inactivity, or at least of his decision to abandon the novel as a form (until Il cavaliere e la morte (1988) and Una storia semplice (1989)), during the last decade of his life, but the effect of what the author saw as the most cynical of impositions of the interests of power over reasonable arguments should not be underestimated.

(66) From the first 'note' to the exercicios, quoted by a Jesuit critic, F. Castelli, 'Leonardo Sciascia tra intemperanze e qualunquismo', La civiltà cattolica (6 September 1975), 396-402 (p. 397 note).

(67) I. Calvino, 'Lettere a Leonardo Sciascia', Forum Italicum, 15, no. 1 (1981), 62-72 (p. 70): letter dated 5 October 1974. Blaise Pascal, Pensieri, edited by Paolo Serini, Turin, 1962.

(68) Cf. Romans VIII. 20-21.

(69) Compare Lafcadio's murder of Fleurissoire in Les Caves du Vatican: Cannon provides an analysis of the relevance of Gide's sotie to Todo modo and suggests that the 'justice' of

Lafcadio's act stems from the fact that the victim had unwittingly passed over to the side of evil. In don Gaetano's case, there is no doubt that he was aware of the sense of his actions, but he has dissolved the notion of 'evil'.

(70) p. 26. The reference to Ariosto brings to mind Nocio's poem in Il contesto:

L'uomo umano ha avuto la sua luna
umana dea
quieto lume d'amore
voi avete la vostra
grigia pomice vaiolosa
deserto degno delle vostre ossa non più umane
natura morta con le ampolle del senno
ma già non sapete niente
dell'ariostesca fiaba di Orlando
del suo senno recuperato da Astolfo
in un viaggio lunare
del senno sigillato in un fiasco
come il vostro (ma irrecuperabile
è il vostro). (pp. 59-60)

It is also mirrored in don Gaetano's words later in Todo modo, 'Il secolo diciottesimo ci ha fatto perdere il senno' quoted above (Todo modo, p. 104).

(71) 'Elogio dell'eresia', L'Ora (May 1979), now in La palma va a nord, pp. 194-202 (p. 199).

(72) 'I barbari sono tra noi', first published in French in Le Nouvel Observateur (June 1978), now in La palma va a nord, pp. 42-55 (p. 48).

(73) At a certain point, Candido's lover, Paola is described as 'stordita di libertà, di felicità' (p. 79), an expression which provides another example of the juxtaposition of the themes of happiness and the irrational.

(74) Sciascia was undoubtedly aware of the following passage in Dostoyevsky's novel, Il villaggio di Stepàncikovo e i suoi abitanti, in the protagonist of which, Fomà Fomič, Candido sees a precursor of the type of 'piccolo despota venuto fuori dalla scorza del buffone', represented by the party secretary (Candido, pp. 89-95):

'Gli scrittori sono volterriani?... Se a una donnetta il latte inacidisce nel bricco, è sempre il signor Voltaire che ne ha colpa! Da noi è sempre così'.

'Ma no! - osservò lo zio con gravità - e un errore! Voltaire era solo uno scrittore acuto, derideva i pregiudizi; ma volterriano non lo fu mai! Sono solo stati i suoi nemici a spargere queste voci sul suo conto. Perché infatti scaricare tutto addosso a lui poveretto?' (Il villaggio di Stepàncikovo e i suoi abitanti, translated by Alfredo Polledro, second edition, Palermo, 1989, pp. 248-9)

Although these words are spoken by the narrator's rather simple uncle, they can be seen to bear a relation to Sciascia's distinction between Voltaire and volterrianesimo.

(75) Il mare colore del vino, sixth edition 'Nuovi Coralli', Turin, 1982, pp. 159-60.

(76) Author's sleeve notes to Cronachette, Palermo, 1985, but a valid statement on all Sciascia's writing.

(77) pp. 20-1: author's italics. The theme of 'order' and its antagonism to 'reason' is at the core of Porte aperte (1987), in which Sciascia reconstructed the case of a judge called upon by the Fascist regime to provide an exemplary death sentence, and of his refusal to do so.

(78) pp. 59-64. The situation and its outcome are similar, in some respects, to those involving Giacosa's fictional counterpart, Bellodi.

(79) An article regarding this case, originally published in L'Espresso (28 August 1988), can be found in A futura memoria, pp. 155-9.

(80) L'affaire Moro. Con aggiunta la Relazione Parlamentare, Palermo, 1983, p. 28.

(81) Il cavaliere e la morte, Milan, 1988; Una storia semplice, Milan, 1989.

(82) 'Breve storia del romanzo giallo', in Epoca (20 and 27 September 1975), now in Cruciverba, Turin, 1983, pp. 216-31 (p. 216) with the title 'Breve storia del romanzo poliziesco'. Sciascia's interest in the detective novel as a form can be traced back to the very beginning of his activity as a writer: see 'Saggio sul romanzo giallo', in Nuova corrente (1956).

(83) In a recent work (Soglie. I dintorni del testo, Turin, 1989), Gérard Genette, the structuralist critic, includes features such as epigraphs, titles and subtitles in what he defines as 'paratesto': everything, that is, which accompanies the text and tends to influence the reader's approach to it.

(84) The subtitle here is obviously paralleled with 'l'optimisme' of Voltaire's Candide, too, with the implication that, in Sicily (and Sicily is a metaphor), optimism is in conflict with reality.

(85) Sciascia declared a profound respect for Conrad, describing him as 'uno scrittore in cui entri con diffidenza, ma che poi ti prende in un modo che vorresti continuare all'infinito' (La palma va a nord, p. 100 (October 1978)).

(86) André Gide, Les Caves du Vatican, Paris, 1984, p. 96.

(87) Sciascia's statements on this theme are amply documented above. The equivocal narrator of Paludes (1920), another of Gide's soties, describes his activity as a writer thus: "'J'arrange les faits de façon à les rendre plus conformes à la vérité que dans la réalité'" (Paris, 1983, p. 22), but this whole concept would, of course, be rejected by more recent critical trends.

(88) Commenting on Todo modo, Sciascia states his desire to show that, 'nei meandri del potere, dove è il grande capitale ad armare la mano degli assassini, ha ben poca importanza l'identità di chi è stato delegato a uccidere' (La palma va a nord, p. 55 (June 1978)).

(89) L'antico cavaliere, in Karen Blixen, Sette storie gotiche, Milan, 1988, translated by Alessandra Scalero and Adriana Motti, pp. 81-106 (p. 99).

(90) Il cavaliere e la morte, p. 77. In his analysis of the genre of the detective novel, Sciascia refers to Gadda's novel as 'il più assoluto "giallo" che sia mai stato scritto, un "giallo" senza soluzione' ('Breve storia del romanzo poliziesco', p. 231). In his own work, this 'absolute' is superseded by the giallo which reflects Sciascia's view of reality: the solution to the crime exists but, at the moment of its discovery by the investigator, the dominant forces within society take the truth and alter it to their own ends.

(91) Il cavaliere e la morte, p. 90. Compare A ciascuno il suo, p. 53, previously quoted:

Che un delitto si offra agli inquirenti come un quadro i cui elementi materiali e, per così dire, stilistici consentano, se sottilmente reperiti e analizzati, una sicura attribuzione, è corollario di tutti quei romanzi polizieschi cui buona parte dell'umanità si abbevera. Nella realtà le cose stanno però diversamente.

(92) The terms scrittura-verità and scrittura-inganno are Sciascia's own, and appear in La Sicilia come metafora, Chapter 4, 'La verità dello scrittore', pp. 62-88 (p. 87).

(93) While it is implied here that the professional journalist is in the pay of the very people he should be denouncing, it could never really be suggested that Sciascia's silence was ever bought, in spite of the accusation of Nando Dalla Chiesa, son of the murdered Prefect of Palermo, that Sciascia was playing 'il gioco della mafia' by refusing to contribute to the rhetoric mythicizing his father's figure. The main points of the controversy between the two can be found in an article by Sciascia in L'Espresso ('Anche i generali sbagliano', 20 February 1983, pp. 50-56, now in A futura memoria, pp. 55-61), and in an interview with Dalla Chiesa in La Repubblica (20-21 February 1983).

(94) There is also a reference to the fifteenth-century fresco of the same title in Palazzo Abatellis in Palermo (Il

cavaliere e la morte, p. 70). Cf. Leonardo Sciascia, 'Il Trionfo della Morte', in L'Illustrazione Italiana, 1 (1974), 62-73.

(95) 1953; an Italian translation by Enrico Filippini with the title Il sospetto, first published in 1960, was republished by Feltrinelli in 1987.

(96) 1952; Il giudice e il suo boia, translated by Enrico Filippini (Milan, 1960).

(97) Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Justiz, Zurich, 1985: 'Ich will noch einmal gewissenhaft die Chancen ausloten, die der Justiz vielleicht doch noch bleiben' (p. 9). The Garzanti translation by Giovanna Agabio gives 'probabilità', not 'possibilità', for 'Chancen' (Giustizia, Milan, 1989, p. 11).

(98) The definitions are taken from G. Devoto and G.C. Oli, Vocabolario della lingua italiana, Florence, 1979.

(99) The description of the Roccella country home is also, perhaps, to be read in a similar light: 'Un fiumiciattolo, che scorreva ai piedi della collina, era ormai soltanto un alveo pietroso, di pietre bianche come ossame; ma la collina, in cima quella masseria in rovina, verdeggiava' (Una storia semplice, p. 13).

(100) Sciascia says of his policemen that they are simply incarnations of the law without which society cannot live, but that they also represent the impossibility of enforcing this law (La Sicilia come metafora, pp. 67-68). He adds that they are ideas rather than characters, 'astrazioni più che realtà' and this would seem to be borne out by the 'abstract' title of the Vice, but the Vice, perhaps more than any of Sciascia's other policemen, is given personal characteristics and human qualities.

(101) The 'parroco di Sant'Anna' describes himself thus in A ciascuno il suo (pp. 74-5).

(102) In Una storia semplice, Sciascia offers an explanation of another aspect of Sicilian literature, when he suggests that southern Italian writers, and Sicilians in particular, share the anguish of the brigadiere at having to write in an idiom which is not their own, and that this anguish serves to concentrate their sense of what is essential (p. 15).

(103) Il cavaliere e la morte, p. 60. Compare this phrase with the accusation of 'moralismo spicciolo' levelled against Sciascia with reference to Il contesto (See note (64) above).

(104) p. 60. Rieti's ideas echo those of Don Benito on 'le mafie vernacole... [e quella] in lingua', referred to above (A ciascuno il suo, p. 90).

(105) Compare Rogas's warning to Riches, President of the Supreme Court and at the centre of the conspiracy of power

discovered by him: "Dico che lei sarà al possibile protetto e sicuro nella misura in cui si sentirà non protetto, non sicuro" (Il contesto, p. 94).

(106) La Sicilia come metafora, p. 71. Sciascia traced this vacuum back to the sessantotto which in Italy, he says, 'ha inaugurato una specie di vacanza nefasta. "Vacanza" nel senso del vuoto che si è fatto' (La palma va a nord, p. 265 (September 1980)).

(107) Sciascia and the Vice define the Revolution of 1789 as the greatest ever (p. 24). Cf. La Sicilia come metafora, p. 59: 'l'unico grande avvenimento rivoluzionario che si sia verificato in tutto il mondo'.

(108) Il cavaliere e la morte, p. 56. These words are reminiscent of those of Amleto at the end of Candido, when he says that Europe has become an orphanage for the orphans of de Gaulle, Franco, Salazar; "e, in Italia, gli orfani del Partito Comunista" (p. 133), although they are without the pointed association of the PCI with the three great right-wing dictators of post-war Europe.

Conclusions.

It is now clear that the three writers examined here are linked in a number of ways. In the first place, there is the task they set themselves of representing reality in their works, and their use of humour and satire which renders explicit their judgement of that reality. Secondly, there is the element of what may be described as 'ethical rationalism' which they shared and which led to their intellectual isolation. Related to this is the crisis provoked by the realization that the discourse of reason, the arm they had hoped to use against power, has, itself, been misappropriated by power.

The analysis of the works of De Roberto, Brancati and Sciascia has provided evidence of these writers' attempts to represent reality in their fiction. In the two works by De Roberto examined in Chapter 2, the author provided a picture of the nature of power in the years which saw the creation of the new Italian nation and in the first decades of unified Italy's history. Brancati portrayed the irrational society of Fascist Italy, and, through his anti-heroic stance, attacked the image promoted by the regime's rhetoric. His observations on the trasformismo which accompanied the fall of the regime indicated the continuation of the political tendency which De Roberto had analysed in his novels. Sciascia's works, whether they be 'detective novels' set in the context of post-war Italian politics, or excursions into Sicilian history, point to a fundamental and tragic coherence in the way power has been exercised unjustly across the centuries.

Through their representation, initially, of Sicilian

society and, subsequently, of the national situation, the three writers sought to understand that reality. The picture which emerged was one of a history in which reason has been continually defeated. In the article previously referred to, in which he attempted to counter the generally-negative critical response to De Roberto's works inspired by Croce's condemnation of them, Sciascia referred to the similarity between De Roberto's disillusionment and that of Brancati, a comparison which can be extended to Sciascia himself ('Perché Croce aveva torto'; see Chapter 2, note (3)). The disillusionment to which Sciascia referred is linked to the 'impietosa analisi della società italiana di ieri e di oggi e delle sue componenti più significative' which, Sciascia suggested, could be found in I Vicerè and Il vecchio con gli stivali, as it could in I promessi sposi (La Sicilia come metafora, p. 83). If we take this as a reference to the repeated adoption of trasformismo as a means of retaining power for power's sake, the description can be seen to fit many of Sciascia's own works, too.

Writing can be both an attempt to find solace and a means of establishing order in a chaotic, irrational world: the order proposed by these writers was that implied by the ideals of the eighteenth-century enlightenment, to be achieved through the exercise of individual reason and through the application of rational principles to the administration of power. All three envisaged freedom of thought and expression not just as rights, but, in Brancati's words, as 'i doveri elementari dell'uomo' (Diario romano, p. 160 (March 1949)). The result of combining these

two positions is a kind of 'ethical rationalism', which, as a philosophy, has been contested ever since it was first mooted in the eighteenth century. The fundamental flaw lies in its reliance on the conception of reason as an innate and absolute value rather than an ideological construct, and of justice as that which all 'rational' persons would recognize as morally right. De Roberto, Brancati and Sciascia all saw politics as a question of ethics: this feeling is summed up in Sciascia's statement that 'uno scrittore dovrebbe sempre poter dire che la politica di cui si occupa è etica. Sarebbe bello che potessero dirlo tutti. Ma che almeno lo dicano gli scrittori' (Nero su nero, p. 69). Their position involved a rejection of dogma and of the exercise of power for its own sake, and inevitably brought them into conflict with critics whose political ideologies and integration with power meant that they were unable to recognize the degree of responsibility of their own parties for the problems of Sicily and Italy in general. The writers faced the dilemma of whether to abandon this ethical position or face isolation, and, to some extent, this was the same dilemma faced by the opposition parties in Italy where the 'regime' - government for the sake of power alone - has existed in one form or another since Unification.

The writers also had to come to terms with the fact that, as has been demonstrated in the course of this study, the discourse which they hoped to oppose to pragmatism has been misappropriated by power or, indeed, was never anything other than an expression of the ideology of power. The written word, and any other form of the discourse of reason,

is an instrument of specific interests rather than of some form of absolute, universal truth. The three writers displayed varying degrees of awareness of the subjective nature of reason, justice, morality, and other such terms. All of them became conscious of the fact that law and authority are not born from reason and one with it, but are based, in fact, on power. In the works of De Roberto and Sciascia, 'rational heroes' tussle with the temptation of 'arbitrio': De Roberto's Ranaldi, and a number of Sciascia's characters, such as Bellodi, Di Blasi, Rogas/Cres, the painter-narrator of Todo modo, and, in the later novels, the Vice and Lagandara, clash with Justice as administered by power without regard for their ideal of reason. Faced with the patent injustice of society, these characters are tempted to execute justice based on individual reason, at which point, however, justice risks becoming 'arbitrio'. The three writers' initial critique of an unjust society, led them eventually to the recognition of the illusory nature of eighteenth-century enlightenment ideals, and of the fragility of the discourse of reason. In this sense, their works should be seen in the context of the crisis suffered by reason upon realizing that the only path open to it is that of self-denunciation: reason is impotent unless it is made the ultimate criterion, but this is a self-contradictory process which pushes it towards the camp of the irrational.

In the conclusion of his critique of subjective reason, Horkheimer mischievously suggested that the greatest service which reason can render humanity is the denunciation of what

generally goes by the name of reason (Eclisse della ragione, p. 160): the works of De Roberto, Brancati and Sciascia may be seen as practical examples of such a theory.

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