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Leonardo Sciascia's *L'affaire Moro*: Re-writing fact, which can be stranger than fiction

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The author contends that Leonardo Sciascia's *L'affaire Moro* is not a work of non-fiction, as Sciascia proposed, but of historical fiction, and that Sciascia's Moro is a literary character, more a spokesperson for Sciascia's political views than a reflection of the historical figure. Sciascia's Moro embodies the same qualities as many of Sciascia's other protagonists, such as a radical individualism and willingness to sacrifice all in order to protect their dignity and liberty. What emanates from the text is a 'postmodern' blend that interprets and imposes a narrative hierarchy on events, and conveys a mental reality that need not necessarily coincide with what can be proven with evidence. In fact, Sciascia combines factual information and his own 'conjectural knowledge' to convince his reader of the 'moral truth' of his argument. Sciascia's is indeed a strong narrative in that it succeeded in shaping how the Italian public views to this day a critical juncture in its recent history.

Keywords: Sciascia; Moro; Red Brigades; Jorge Luis Borges; postmodernism; historical compromise

L'affaire Moro, Leonardo Sciascia's commentary on the 1978 kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, a leading Christian Democrat (DC), is one of the writer's many *inchieste*, a hybrid genre of documentable fact and creative fiction, a 'commingling' of fictional detective writing and non-fictional investigative writing (Mullen 2000, 3). In what follows I will argue that, consistent with other Sciascian *inchieste*, in *L'affaire Moro* fiction predominates over historiography to the extent that Sciascia's Moro is a literary character,[1] an embodiment of '*il tenace concetto*', a trait shared by many of Sciascia's protagonists (e.g. Diego La Matina of *Morte dell'Inquisitore*, the 'little judge' of *Porte aperte*, and the protagonist of a novella by Sciascia, '*L'antimonio*').[2] These characters all demonstrate the willingness to sacrifice their lives and careers in order to affirm 'the dignity and honour of man, the strength of thought, the perseverance of will, the victory of liberty'.[3] Moro, like these fictional characters, represents how Sciascia lived his '*sicilitudine*', which he defined as 'a tendency to isolation, to the separation which is of a piece with the illusion that a similar insularity constitutes privilege and strength'.[4] In this propensity is mirrored '*il tenace concetto*', as is Sciascia's own sense of 'estrangement' from the State (Sciascia 1982, 21). Indeed, I contend that Sciascia's fictional Moro is spokesperson for Sciascia's political views.

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Although Sciascia, to my knowledge, was not versed in postmodern literary theory, *L'affaire Moro* seems immersed in the so-called postmodern *Zeitgeist* of the 1970s, which questioned strong notions of truth, proposing instead that material reality could only be known as interpretation (and interpretation of interpretations), as can be gleaned, in our case, from seminal writings by John Barth and Hayden White. Indeed, Sciascia infuses into this *inchiesta* sufficient historical plausibility to inform future recountings of events. He argues in favour of, and his readers accept, the truth value of this historical fiction. Thus, reality is mystified, and preserved for 'future memory':[5] that is to say it is reified as it enters into the realm of the reader's experience and determines posterity's view of the past.[6]

Such re-writing of history is consistent with a fundamental '*antistoricismo*' (Onofri 2004, 18) for which historical truth is synonymous with metatemporal moral categories. As is the case with other *inchieste* by Sciascia, *L'affaire* orders the chaos of lived experience; history is neither a retrieval of material reality nor a progression in time. Therefore, I will treat *L'affaire Moro* as the subjective testimony of one Italian who lived through this dramatic event, and interrogate not its accuracy as much as the narrative strategy employed and the light the text sheds on the mindset of its author. For this reason, particular attention will be given to Sciascia's identification of Moro with the cause of freedom and to the text's polemical targets, the death penalty and the *compromesso storico*.[7] In other words, I will treat *L'affaire Moro* not as a historical document, but, following the suggestion of Carlo Ginzburg, as a work of fiction 'impregnated with history', and I will 'brush Sciascia against the grain' and see what (in)voluntary traces emerge (Ginzburg 2006, 9–11).

Moro was kidnapped, and his five-man police escort murdered, shortly after departing his home on the morning of 16 March 1978. Moro was on his way to Parliament for the vote that would have sanctioned the formation of a government that was to have been supported by the Italian Communist Party (PCI), thus putting an end to 30 years of the *conventio ad excludendum*, the highly anomalous situation that limited the activities of Italy's largest opposition party, the PCI, to representing broad strata of society and bringing forth political and parliamentary initiatives, while excluding it from the country's government (Barbagallo 2009, 26). Two days after the abduction, the influential Milanese daily *Corriere della sera* asked leading intellectuals their opinion of what was transpiring. Sciascia, who had a penchant for polemics, remained uncharacteristically silent. He jumped into the fray when the editor of the Communist daily *Paese sera*, Aniello Coppola, called the author to task for his silence (see Coppola and Collura 2007, 265). Sciascia, it is well known, enjoyed disputation; as he told one interviewer, '[s]hould I follow my instinct, I would engage much more often in polemics, something I believe I am very good at' (Sciascia 1982, 140).

Coppola interrogated Sciascia because eight months before the Moro kidnapping a protracted and at times acrimonious debate, with Sciascia at centre stage, had taken place in the mainstream press.[8] The discussion had been occasioned by the desertion of a jury charged with trying a contingent of left-wing terrorists: the jurors all had themselves exempted from service for medical reasons after receiving threats from the Red Brigades (BR). The topic of the polemic was the social function and responsibilities of the intellectual. After Eugenio Montale gave the discussion its initial impetus by asserting 'no one can be asked to be a hero' (Porzio 1977, IX), Sciascia quickly upped the ante. He declared his unwillingness to support a State 'in decomposition' – the Italian State was not worth defending against terrorist assaults – and to legitimise Italy's power elite: 'an

unchanging group of that will not change unless it commits suicide'. In various venues he told of his fundamental 'repulsion for judging' and stated that the only possible reason he might serve on the jury would be personal, to prove to himself that he was not afraid: he did not want to repeat his behaviour of 20 years earlier, when he had actively sought an exemption from jury duty, 'running to beg they not include me in the jury lottery' (Porzio 1977, 12–14).

Sciascia interjected repeatedly in the debate. His neutrality in the struggle between the Italian State and terrorism can be summarised in the slogan 'neither with the BR, nor with this State'. Sciascia would also contend that his willingness to speak his truth – against the conformism of those who participated in a Stalinistic *gioco delle parti*, an imposture or assumption of artificial roles assigned by tradition, in defence of a State in which no one truly believed – was the true mark of courage (Porzio 1977, 35–36). His principal respondents were an array, for the most part, of Communist intellectuals whose contributions were all variations on the same theme: those who wished to further the progressive and democratic social project inherent in the Constitution were obligated to defend the State against the reactionary threat inherent in terrorism.

Sciascia had the worst of this debate. Natalia Ginzburg (who was not a Communist) eloquently challenged his commitment to justice and to truth. What was missing from the discussion, she indicated, was the rights both of society at large and of the victims of terrorism: 'even if we believe that the State is in ruin and does not defend us, we still have to do what it asks from us, in this specific circumstance, where justice is at risk' (Porzio 1977, 139). Since she did not explicitly call Sciascia to task, he did not respond to her. Later on, the poet Edoardo Sanguineti, who at that time represented the PCI on the city council of his home town, Genoa, chided Sciascia, who had resigned from the Palermo City Council in 1977, for encouraging others to 'resign as citizens'. Sanguineti then delivered a second telling blow when he argued that for Sciascia maintaining 'clean hands and [a] tranquil conscience' mattered more than the course ultimately taken by events (Porzio 1977, 165–66).

So, while Italians were dealing with the shock of the Moro kidnapping and the murder of his five bodyguards, Coppola asked why the usually loquacious Sciascia was strangely silent on the terrorist strike 'at the heart of the State'. Sciascia quickly responded: '[m]y silence was a religious silence, a rethinking of my life, of what I have written, the consequences, and also the responsibilities' (Sciascia 1982, 145). Sciascia would definitively end this 'religious silence', prompted by the kidnapping, with *L'affaire Moro*, published a scant three months after the assassination of Moro on 9 May 1978.

I contend that one of his implicit goals in writing this text was to settle a score with those who took exception to his stance during the 1977 debate on the social function of the intellectual, in his own words an '*ouverture* to that melodrama of love for the State which was so grandiosely recited on the Italian stage, from March 16 to May 9, 1978' (2004, II, 483). I make this claim because Sciascia's personal 'resentment' (Macaluso 2010, 57) for those 'exponents of the Italian Communist Party' – who during the 1977 debate had created, in Sciascia's words, a climate of hostility 'against those who did not demonstrate an ardent love for the State' (2004, II, 483) – caused the writer to come forth with a binary opposition that altered the Communists' position, accusing them of having moved 'Stalinistically' to silence anyone who did not agree with them and of manipulating the DC to reinstate the death penalty in Italy.

Thus, *L'affaire* is a 'religious' text occasioned by 'a sentiment of pity for this lonely and betrayed man, declared insane by his own friends' (Sciascia 1982, 144); its focus is 'the Aldo Moro plunged into tragedy, the Aldo Moro who discovers, during imprisonment, that power is a vanishing dream, the Aldo Moro who could have been the protagonist of Calderon's *Life is a dream*' (Dauphiné 1991, 40). Prior to the kidnapping, Sciascia felt no sympathy for one of the leaders of a party that for Sciascia was 'synonymous . . . with evil in Italy'. It is also a fiction: '[the] *Affaire Moro* is literature, I hope good literature, the kind that brings out the truth' (Sciascia 1982, 76). According to Sciascia, that 'Truth' is ineffable; it can be 'felt', but not described (Sciascia 1982, 230–31). It need not adhere to lived reality or historical fact but to timeless moral truths. In Sciascia's own words, literature exists outside time, in a 'metaphysical' dimension (2004, II, 829–30; see also 834; 1132–33).

Sciascia wrote investigative fictions – *gialli*, historical novels, and *inchieste* – because they allowed him to seek out such metaphysical truths: as he told an interviewer, 'the police novel always presupposes a metaphysics, and I am religious, even if not Catholic, even if non-practising' (Biagi 1973, 3). And because 'the historical record . . . has proved inadequate or misleading', Sciascia's search for the truth relies heavily 'on literature to interpret the past' (Mullen 2000, 3). In other words, Sciascia very often supports his arguments not with documents but with concepts culled from his readings of fiction.

Indeed, *L'affaire Moro* is replete with references to crime fiction. It closes with a quote from 'Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain', one of Borges's *Ficciones*. The citation serves to remind Sciascia's audience, should they have forgotten, that they had just finished reading a 'romanzo poliziesco' (2004, II, 565), a novel that tears asunder the mystifications of those in Power and approached the Truth of what happened during those 54 days. Like the audience of 'Herbert Quain', Sciascia's readers cannot expect the author to retrieve with exhaustive accuracy all the 'details of the action'. But they should be able to glean 'the general plan' the author has suggested but not made explicit in 'the suspicious chapters' and arrive at '*another* solution, the real one' (ibid., 565). In other words, Sciascia's fiction orders the chaotic succession of events, and enables readers to unravel the falsehoods regarding Moro's mental stability during the period he was held hostage and arrive at a comprehension of 'what really happened'.

For Borges, both political and fantastic stories arrive at a 'true solution' when, presumably, they give events a coherent 'beginning, middle, and end' thus 'safeguard[ing] order in an era of disorder'. And the writer who (even unwittingly) 'sustains an ideal of classical order' deserves our gratitude (Casares and Borges 1983, 8). It may very well be from Borges that Sciascia took his 'idea of literature as a cosmos that can be ordered through infinite geometries as opposed to life's chaos, a cosmos which is as free, clear and rational as reality is opaque, compelled and irrational' (Onofri 2004, 18). Therefore, the *inchiesta*, because it emplots events when it imposes a narrative hierarchy on them, creates for the reader a mental reality, a Truth, that need not coincide perfectly with what can be proved with evidence.[9] As Sciascia averred in a 1978 interview, after a certain point in time he could no longer discern any boundary between literature and reality (Sciascia 1982, 109–10).

The quote from Borges's 'Herbert Quain' at the conclusion of *L'affaire Moro* makes intratextual reference to Chapter 3, as we shall see. It is also pendant to Sciascia's evocation of Pier Paolo Pasolini in his introductory chapter. The text opens with a citation of a famous editorial by Pasolini, in which the poet stressed the need to put on trial

'*il Palazzo*', his term for the corrupt system of power, dominated by the DC, which had reigned in Italy since the election of the Republic's first legislature in 1948. In the so-called '*Articolo delle lucciole*' Pasolini states very clearly that his *j'accuse* is set forth in literary, not juridical, terms: he is a writer who debates issues with other writers and who, in this instance, was attempting to give poetic-literary definition to the degradation wrought in Italy by 30 years of DC rule (quoted in Sciascia 2004, II, 468). By citing Pasolini, Sciascia sets in place the conditions of the 'fictional agreement', to use Umberto Eco's term,[10] between writer and reader upon which *L'affaire Moro* is constructed: Sciascia's text is also a 'poetic-literary' recounting of historical events; it is a historical fiction that does not impose on itself the task of re-creating the reality of what 'really happened', but that of extracting from events a moral truth.

Sciascia often acknowledged his debt to Borges. The latter, in discussing detective fictions, puts into relief the purely intellectual, unrealistic nature of the genre when he points out how in the narratives of Poe, the founder of the genre, crimes are solved without the benefit of concrete evidence: 'the fact is that a crime is solved by an abstract reasoner, not because of informants or because of the carelessness of the perpetrators' (1980, 84). Unlike real detectives, fictional ones can bring criminals to justice solely on the basis of a Pasolinian '*Io so*'.[11] Sciascia, in his *gialli* and *inchieste*, uses powers of deduction similar to those of Borges's Lönnrot, who 'believed himself a pure thinker, an Auguste Dupin' (Borges 1993, 102), to uncover the *verità*, a moral – not a material – truth.

In Chapter 3 Sciascia gives a summary, in the present tense, of what transpired immediately prior to the ambush in via Fani. Then, following the example of Borges's Pierre Menard, he 're-reads' the exact same chronicle with the benefit of historical hindsight. For Menard history is not an investigation into lived reality based on evidence; rather, it is a re-reading, in the light of the present, of the texts that recorded it. In this same chapter Sciascia also muses on how Unamuno's *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho* (a re-working of Cervantes' *Historia del famoso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*) irrevocably conditioned – 'a futura memoria' – all subsequent readings of Cervantes' classic. Because Unamuno's re-creation of the *Quixote*, compared with the original, is '[i]n all ways equal. And in all ways different' (2004, II, 477), it unavoidably informs all subsequent readings of Cervantes.

Here is the crux of Sciascia's *antistoricismo* (Onofri 2004, 18), or, to phrase it a bit differently, his 'postmodern' tendency to absorb or level the past into the present: 'the Unamunian interpretation, which seemed as transparent as a crystal with regards to Cervantes' work, was in fact a mirror' of Unamuno's own life and times (Sciascia 2004, II, 476). Unamuno's appropriation of Cervantes is emblematic of the atemporal essence of literature espoused by Sciascia. For Borges, too, the here and now of the text's production does not matter; what matters is when and how the text is consumed: books begin to exist only when 'the reader opens them' (Borges 1980, 72). Following Borges' Menard, Sciascia argues that historical truth is not relevant; rather, '[t]he historical truth . . . is not what happened', but rather 'what we judge to have happened' (2004, II, 477).

Sciascia, so that he might mentally reconstruct what he believes, or better, judges has happened, proceeds to summarise the salient events of Moro's imprisonment and discusses them in chronological order – 'changing everything without changing anything' (2004, II, 477) – treating the case as an 'already completed literary work' (ibid., 477) that has, by the time of his writing, become '*déjà lu*'. In other words, Sciascia confronts his readers with an interesting rhetorical strategy: he will demonstrate tautologically that which is already

known by taking them down the "beaten path" of what, for critics of the *compromesso storico*, was foreseeable. Once Moro was captured, a new government majority, which extended leftward from the DC all the way to a PCI still laden with its Stalinist legacy, was hastily voted into office; that majority predictably closed ranks when confronted by the terrorist threat and quickly approved measures that repressed civil liberties.[12]

Since literature for Sciascia is a 'place without time' (Onofri 2004, 18), readers cannot use it to historicise themselves: they cannot hope to come to a better understanding of their own situatedness through contemplation of the humus, the here and now, of a text's production. For Sciascia, texts are not intended as sites for dialogue in absentia with a writer; readings (interpretations of texts) are merely occasions for reflection on 'eternal' moral categories (such as Fascism/Stalinism – see 2004, I, 361). Sciascia – following Unamuno and Menard, both of whom 'transcend' history, 'become' Cervantes and 're-write' the *Quixote* – avails himself of the timelessness of literature and comes forth with an 'interpretation' of a 'history that is already a literary work' (2004, II, 544); he creates a Dantesque Moro in the writer's own image, a character who passes through the *Inferno* of the '*prigione del popolo*', purifies himself by renouncing Power, and attains salvation. To borrow Borges's phrasing, Sciascia 'arrives at' Aldo Moro 'through the experiences' of Leonardo Sciascia while he 'continues to be' Leonardo Sciascia (Borges 1993, 32–33), an interpreter of – or, perhaps more precisely, someone endowed with historical and political hindsight who speaks through – Moro's letters.

Mastery of Menard's method of '*total* identification' (Borges 1993, 32–33; Borges's emphasis) enables Sciascia to 'solve' the Moro case using the example of Poe's Auguste Dupin; that is to say, Sciascia identifies with and replicates the thought patterns of both his deuteragonist, the BR, and his protagonist, Moro (2004, II, 490–91). As a result, the Moro who emerges from Sciascia's pages demonstrates both the '*tenace concetto*' that defines multiple Sciascian protagonists, and the need to be courageous that Sciascia claimed would have been his only reason for serving on the jury charged with trying terrorists in Turin in spring 1977.

Like Dupin, Sciascia in *L'affaire Moro* (it is painful to acknowledge) has an incompetent police force for foil (Poe 1992, 572). Poe's police err because of their insistence on a deductive approach to crime solving. That is to say, the clues they uncover are made to fit a system of interpretation of evidence established before the fact, before the crime has been committed. Both Poe's and Sciascia's police derive their conclusions from something known or assumed on the basis of previous experience, the *modus operandi* of the object of investigation. For Dupin the police's 'blind following' of established principles of evidence 'is a sure mode of attaining the *maximum* of attainable truth'; however, 'it is not the less certain that it engenders vast individual error' (Poe 1992, 565–66). By contrast and following Dupin (whose 'ultimate object is only the truth' [Poe 1992, 495]), Sciascia adduces (he cites as pertinent certain observations and facts, bringing them forward as proofs), then induces (he asserts a theory based on those observations and facts), then draws what he purports are scientific conclusions.

Moreno argues that there is a similarity between Sciascia's mode of proceeding and the 'evidentiary' or 'divinatory paradigm' highlighted by Carlo Ginzburg (which can be described as 'the capacity to go back from experimental and apparently nonessential data to a complex and not directly experimentable reality' – Ginzburg, quoted in Moreno 1999, 67). But there is a fundamental difference: Ginzburg's method is 'based on semiotics' (1979, 66), that is to say on 'traces', material proofs – as Ginzburg, arguing against

Hayden White, phrases it: 'reality ("the thing in itself") exists' (2006, 203). Such traces do allow for 'conjectural understanding' of the past; but Ginzburg's model detective is Sherlock Holmes (the creation of a physician, Conan Doyle) who proceeds on the basis of physical evidence. By contrast, Sciascia's inductive approach appropriates 'traces' that dissolve into the immateriality of pure thought. Sciascia, who expressed his disdain for science in diverse venues,[13] contended in a theoretical essay on detective fiction that 'nothing is less scientific than science when one tries to apply it to a crime' (2004, II, 1189) and wrote with satisfaction of the popularity of Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, heroes of 'traditional', 'problematic and intellectual' *gialli* (ibid., 1193) who, like Dupin, eschew forensic evidence in favour of pure reason.

Sciascia brings Chapter 3 of *L'affaire Moro* to a close explaining how literature abstracts events into 'a dimension of imaginative or indefectibly fantastic consequentiality' (2004, II, 480), resulting in stories that are plausible, verisimilar, but not real. He then argues that the incompetence demonstrated by the Italian police during the investigation was real, but not plausible; a recounting of the inability of the police to rescue Moro, in defiance of the laws of probability, would make for bad literature. By contrast, a re-telling of what unfolded 'unreally within a very real, historical and cultural climate' (ibid., 479), because it is verisimilar, is a proper resident of the literary dimension.

And so what follows the premise set forth in the first three chapters of *L'affaire Moro* is Sciascia's theory of how that *sueño*, or irreality, played out. In a manner highly reminiscent of the writings of John Barth, a founding theoretician of literary postmodernism, Sciascia argues that the real Moro was fictionalised when the DC and the press depicted him as 'a great statesman' (2004, II, 481). How, Sciascia rightly asks, could 'a great statesman', that is, a man who always had identified the good of his own political party with that of all Italians, be mistaken for someone who 'gives intelligent faithfulness, meditation, study' to the State's structure and laws (ibid., 482)? This confusion was intentional: those at the helm of the Italian State thought it necessary to discredit Moro, once he had been kidnapped, to forestall any return to public service, had he been released, by convincing the public that an extremely lucid statesman had been psychologically destroyed by the BR.[14]

This first fiction or mystification of Moro justifies Sciascia's subsequent fictional, or Barthian, 'framing'. Once the fallacy of Moro the 'great statesman' is superimposed on and obscures reality, all that remains are the narratives that interpret Moro's ordeal, and in turn are subject to interpretation. Investigation of historical truth, what can be corroborated, is set aside in favour of pursuing a moral truth that speaks 'eloquently and memorably to our human hearts and conditions' (Barth 1984, 67).

In Sciascia's writings, when morality comes into conflict with strict adherence to what can be known, the former always trumps the latter. Indeed, doubt is interspersed throughout *L'affaire Moro*, a work filled with conjecture and verbs in the subjunctive mood. Sciascia does so advisedly, because he is well aware of the nature of his model reader:

> ...the reader of *gialli* is by nature disattentive, i.e. he is characterized by distraction the moment he chooses to read a giallo: and this is because he knows that only the detective, bringer of some sort of 'illuminating grace', is capable of resolving the mystery. (Sciascia 1975, 234)

According to Sciascia, typical readers of detective fictions willingly acknowledge their 'inferiority and intellectual passivity' (2004, II, 1182) and follow the lead of the investigator. In other words, implicit in the 'fictional agreement' between Sciascia and his reader is the reader's acceptance of Sciascia's 'illuminating grace' and, consequently, the moral of Sciascia's story – in this case, Moro's death being a State-sanctioned murder. In other words, the reader endorses Sciascia's logic – the politicians who did not negotiate with the BR for Moro's life reinstated, de facto, the death penalty in Italy – and appropriates Sciascia's view of what 'really happened'. Moro's death is not to be ascribed to those who captured and murdered him in cold blood, but instead to the '*raison d'État*' behind the *compromesso storico*, 'a unitary administration of power' by a regime that refused to consider any 'alternatives and divest(ed) the opposition of any authority' (Sciascia 1979, 8).

Thus, the complexity of what transpired is presented in terms of Good vs. the Evil *Palazzo*, of which the reader sees only the façade. As for Sciascia's fictional Moro, if he is to embody the Good and '*il tenace concetto*', he must, like Sciascia's Majorana before him, distance himself from all '*cosche*' (2004, II, 223–24). He must embody the writer's 'aversion to the herd' and 'contradictory spirit' (Ambroise 2004, XVIII),[15] and struggle to preserve his 'degnità', Sciascia's euphemism for maintaining against all odds one's own self-respect in the face of the pressures exerted by dominant, arbitrary power (2004, III, 364) and complement of '*il tenace concetto*'.[16] Moro must, like Diego La Matina, be another *sconfitto* with whom Sciascia can identify.[17]

In sum, Moro must be an outward emanation of Sciascia's own public self-image. This is why the DC leader must reject the alliance of party leaderships and 'a redistribution of the roles between two components of power' (Rossani 1990, 110–11) set in motion by the liberticide *gioco delle parti* that was the *compromesso storico*. Moro must also – despite the extraordinary circumstances of his incarceration – implausibly 'resist the trial' to which the BR subject him.[18]

True to this form, Sciascia's Moro willingly assumes the heavy mantle of his punishment: 'he was forced, *he forced himself*, to live for about two months a horrendous *contrappasso*' (2004, II, 471; emphasis added). He purges himself of 'sins' committed while enjoying the 'happy hours' of Power (ibid., 544) when he denounces his colleagues in the DC for appropriating the 'statolatry' of the PCI and, with 'a human life... at risk', allowed 'abstract principals' to triumph over Christian piety (ibid., 496).

Once stripped of power, Moro 'resolves' ('*sciolse*') what Pasolini called 'the enigmatic correlation'. What was 'enigmatic' for Pasolini was the relationship between Moro, 'the least involved of all' (quoted in Sciascia 2004, II, 469) and those behind the 'horrible things that have been organized from '69 to the present day, in the attempt, so far successful, to maintain power by any means' (Pasolini 1999, 410). Sciascia takes but truncates this quotation from Pasolini, so that the relationship that is 'resolved' (and dissolved, or '*sciolto*') is not between Moro and a clandestine, reactionary form of power, '*lo stragismo*' but between Moro and all Power. To accomplish this, Sciascia must read the *corsivo* outside the context in which it was written, that is as an element of the *processo al Palazzo* Pasolini conducted in the popular press the last year or two of his life.[19] Doing so enables Sciascia to force Moro into the mould of '*il tenace concetto*'. Indeed, 'stripped of his power and acknowledging the diabolic nature of power' Moro '[d]issolved the correlation before God' (2004, II, 553). Moro 'redeems' himself when he both refutes power and heroically behaves as a 'spy in enemy territory and watched by the enemy' (ibid., 471).

Parenthetically, Sciascia also takes the term 'happy hours' out of context to alter what Moro had intended to convey. Moro had written of 'happy hours' spent with his 'many supporters' in the DC (ibid., 541). By contrast, Sciascia has Moro ironising on the very concept of power (ibid., 544). Sciascia does so because if Moro is to exemplify '*il tenace concetto*' he must be presented as another disarmed prophet whose only weapons are his pen and his adroit use of irony.[20]

Sciascia's Moro – despite the fact that he is 'under full and uncontrolled domination' – is somehow able to dupe the BR and send coded messages to the outside by putting in his letters 'what the jailors want him to say', '*making himself understood* while using the same instruments he had used and experimented with in order *not to be understood*' (2004, II, 471; emphasis in the original). He hides between the lines 'what they would not allow him to say'. So, Sciascia avers:

> ... *it is to be believed* that he thought about it for hours and hours, during sleepless nights, waiting for the moment in which they would have allowed him to write .... *And we must also believe* that censorious interventions, if there were any, were minimal: giving credit to Moro for having understood what the Red Brigades' game was and how to go along with it, in exchange for that meagre and precarious margin of freedom. (2004, II, 490; emphases added)

Ultimately, Sciascia's Moro cleanses himself of 'all of his historical responsibilities' (Sciascia 1982, 42) and, despite the fact that his letters are those of a man desperately clinging to life, Moro is depicted by Sciascia as stoically facing death ('I don't think he was afraid of death', 2004, II, 498). When his DC comrades say they do not recognise him in his letters, he rejects them and achieves salvation:

> Moro begins, in Pirandellian fashion, to free himself from form, and enter, tragically, into life. From character to 'uomo solo', from 'uomo solo' to 'creature': the phases that for Pirandello are the only ones that can lead to salvation. (2004, II, 513)

Moro, 'creature' (or character who has found his author, Leonardo Sciascia), exits *il gioco delle parti* of politics and enters into the timeless realm of literature transubstantiating into synecdoche of the cause of freedom:

> In the 'people's prison' Moro saw freedom in peril and understood whence it comes and who carries it and how. Perhaps he also understood that he too was a carrier of the peril: like some contagions that people carry with them without being affected by them. Hence his anxiety to leave the 'people's prison': in order to communicate what he has understood, what he now knows. (2004, II, 499–500)

The danger to which Sciascia refers did not come from Moro's jailors, whose '*etica carceraria*' is portrayed in a favourable light by Sciascia, in contrast to the poor treatment reserved for those *brigatisti* arrested and imprisoned by the Italian State. The BR, the reader is reminded, prepare risotto for their prisoners because 'their surveillance cannot and must not cause alienation and annihilation' as is the case in Italian prisons (2004, II, 472). Furthermore, a 'gratuitousness, a lack of ulterior motives and goals' (ibid., 473) causes them to risk capture by delivering numerous letters to Moro's loved ones simply to assure them that he is 'well nourished' and 'carefully attended to' (ibid., 473).

Sciascia proposes that such selfless 'postal zeal' is attributable to the terrorists' respect for Article 15 of the Italian Constitution, which, in reaction to the harsh conditions imposed on those who resisted Fascism, contains a norm 'relative to postal privacy', that is, to the 'inviolability of correspondence among free citizens of a free country'.[21] But the BR's respect for 'postal privacy', Sciascia must acknowledge, only goes into effect a month

after Moro's capture, after they have sentenced him to death. From that point on 'it is not the Red Brigades who release Moro's letters'. Rather, it is the antagonist, the recipients of the letters, the men who had abandoned Moro to his fate and collaborated in the creation of a new image for Sciascia's protagonist, that of a once-lucid politician who had taken leave of his senses (2004, II, 473).

Prior to receiving the death sentence, the prisoner's right to 'postal privacy' is ignored. On 29 March the BR made public a letter from Moro to the Minister of the Interior, Francesco Cossiga. The BR had assured their victim this note would remain confidential. In betraying their prisoner's trust, the BR proclaim (in their 'Comunicato numero 3', to which this missive was appended) one of their guiding principles, that of not hiding anything from *il popolo* (2004, II, 473).

Moro's letter to Cossiga was one of three released to the press together with the BR's '*Comunicato numero 3*'. The other two were to Moro's wife and to Nicola Rana, Moro's secretary, the latter a covering letter with instructions on how the first two missives were to be delivered so as to maintain confidentiality (Cherchi and Garelli 2003, 15). While Moro's letters to Rana and Cossiga are not dated, Moro's note to his wife was written on Easter Sunday, 26 March.

Giovanni Pellegrino explains that the publication of the letter to Cossiga by the BR was tantamount to their signing Moro's death warrant.[22] For those in charge of the investigation, this caused the value of the prisoner to plummet; their primary goal became that of recovering any transcripts or tapes containing his 'testimony' (Fasanella, Pellegrino and Sestieri 2008, 169–70). Indeed, on 30 March, the day after Moro's letter arrived, the DC underwrote the *linea della fermezza*, followed by the other parties of the governing coalition (Cherchi and Garelli 2003, 21). Moro, who was supplied with newspapers by his jailors, had to have understood the ramifications of the publication of his note,[23] and so, there now is strong reason to believe that he took charge of negotiating for the BR, at times adopting the terrorists' own language (using terms such as *strage di Stato*, Sciascia 2004, II, 564), in the hope of obtaining his own release.[24]

Moro, in his letter to Cossiga – adopting the cryptic language of which he was master; that of '*saying* with the language of *not saying*' (Sciascia 2004, II, 471; emphasis in the original) – let the DC hierarchy know that he was considered a political prisoner subjected to 'a full and uncontrolled domination' that might be 'conveniently increased' and that soon he might be 'prompted to talk in a way that might be unpleasant and dangerous in certain conditions' (ibid., 488). In other words, we may assume he feared revealing state secrets, such as the existence of Gladio, a clandestine armed organisation created by American and Italian secret services in the earliest years of the Cold War for the purpose of warding off a suspected advance of Soviet armed forces (Barbagallo 2009, 202).

In the BR's '*Comunicato numero 3*' the terrorists vaunt the 'complete collaboration of the prisoner' whose '"illuminating" responses' had helped them better understand the lead role in Italy assigned to the DC by an international conspiracy of multinational corporations along with the 'structures and men that manage the counter-revolutionary project', 'their interdependence', and their 'subordination to the imperialist and international systems', to 'occult finances', and to 'economic-political-military plans to be implemented in Italy' (Cherchi and Garelli 2003, 16).

This last statement appears to be an obscure reference to Gladio. In other words, between the composition of Moro's letter and the release of '*Comunicato numero 3*', it would seem that Moro did what he feared he would do when he wrote to Cossiga: he revealed

highly confidential State secrets. Although it is not possible to ascertain with precision what Sciascia knew and when he learned it, particularly as regards Gladio, we do know that Sciascia underwrites (2004, II, 496) a BR declaration – in '*Comunicato numero 6*' – that sought to minimise the promise of full disclosure made in '*Comunicato numero 3*' and reiterated in '*Comunicato numero 5*'. According to '*Comunicato numero 6*' there were no '"clamorous revelations" to be made'; the interrogation had brought nothing newsworthy to light (Cherchi and Garelli 2003, 41; 42). This makes sense, from a literary standpoint, because if Moro is to embody '*il tenace concetto*' he had to 'resist the trial'.[25]

Furthermore, Moro's jailors, Sciascia argues, were moved to feel the same Christian piety towards their victim that motivated Sciascia to write this text (2004, II, 543; 556).[26] Whether or not this was the case, for our purposes what matters is how Sciascia thus creates a stark contrast between the suffering humanity of the protagonist and deuteragonist on the one hand, and, on the other, the coldness of the antagonist (those who had underwritten the liberticide *compromesso storico* and ultimately reinstated, through their refusal to negotiate, the death penalty in Italy).

Between publication of *L'affaire Moro* and the writing of his *Relazione di minoranza* Sciascia published *Il teatro della memoria* (2004, II, 899–936), another historical piece. *Il teatro* retells the true story on which Pirandello's *Come tu mi vuoi* was based: that of a woman who convinces herself that a conman is her long-lost husband. For Sciascia *Come tu mi vuoi* is 'an apologue about the power of believing, belief which becomes faith' (ibid., 298). In *Il teatro*, Bolzoni explains, 'the mind creates its own performances' (2000, 105) when chronological time and objective, verifiable events mix with subjective recollection, distorting reality (ibid., 105). Since the mind is prey to 'the deceptions – willing and unwilling – of memory' (Sciascia 2004, II, 901), reality is merely what one believes, what one wants to believe 'against all evidence' (ibid., 905).

In Sciascia's *Teatro* the 'real' memory of a woman adapts so as to coincide with the 'artificial' memory of the feigned amnesiac who pretends to remember their past life together so as to evade the legal consequences of his petty thievery. In both *Come tu mi vuoi* and *Il teatro della memoria* 'real' and 'artificial' memory combine to supplant reality. In *L'affaire Moro* a mental reality, the treacherous '*disconoscimento*', or refusal to recognize Moro (Sciascia 1982, 65), by his DC comrades, mirrors the 'false *riconoscimento*' of *Il teatro della memoria* (2004, II, 910–11) and is countered by Sciascia's 'artificial memory', a narrative that transforms the historical Aldo Moro into a Pirandellian character in a ghoulish 'theatre of memory' (that is to say, a Proustian *recherche* into memory distorted by time, ibid., 923), a macabre *gioco delle parti* whose other *dramatis personae*, in addition to the BR, are the DC and PCI leaderships (ibid., 494, 509). In *L'affaire Moro* memory is manipulated to create a heroic Moro whose perspectives on the *compromesso storico* reflect Sciascia's own.

The memory reified by *L'affaire* and reiterated in Sciascia's *Relazione di minoranza* is that of how the BR kidnapped Moro and executed him, so as to alter the balance of power in Parliament, achieving, however, the opposite of what they intended: they drove the PCI and the DC closer together, realizing 'the worst possible communist severity... at the service of Communist totalitarianism' (*l'unicità del comunismo*, Moro quoted in Sciascia, 2004, II, 565). Sciascia reminds us that the BR were able to carry out their plan because of gross police incompetence, but goes on to argue that the greatest impediment to finding Moro was the refusal of those in power to acknowledge the lucidity of his letters and treat them as if they contained coded messages that might have led to his rescue. With the

phrase 'the worst possible communist severity... at the service of the Communist totalitarianism' (ibid., 565), Sciascia contends that Moro sought to 'foreshadow... the suspicion, if not the certainty, of some sort of connection of the Red Brigades with international Communism or with a country of the Communist regime' whose goal was to 'destabilize' Italy (ibid., 596, 597).[27] Had this hypothesis been pursued, he suggests, the police might have succeeded in 'resolving' the 'enigmatic correlation' between the Italian government and *lo stragismo*, and rescued Moro.

L'affaire Moro is a *ficción* that parachutes Sciascia's reader into a Borgesian circular universe (2004, III, 162). A politician who lacks 'a sense of State' and is defined by his 'continuous adaptability' (Sciascia 1982, 65) is celebrated by a writer who objects to the politician's self-identification with the 'general will' (2004, II, 499), a writer whose public self-image is that of an intellectual defined by his intransigent ethics. This writer, who is 'estranged' from the State, identifies with the kidnapped politician's isolation and projects his own radical individualism onto the politician with whom he shares the belief that the need to save at any cost an innocent human life trumps the needs and rights of the collectivity.[28] The writer applauds the politician when the latter stands on principle and denounces the unexpected resolve of his former comrades – members of a political party the writer considers 'spineless, willing, compliant and at the same time tenacious, patient, prehensile' (Manacorda 1996, 163) – who, surprisingly, refuse to barter the State. So, following Sciascia's logic, setting a precedent for further terrorist blackmail was the only ethical stance possible.

The writer's tale frames that of the politician; it begins as a sort of stream of consciousness – sparked by the sight of fireflies – that proceeds to pass through the *temps retrouvé* of the journalistic chronicle of a highly significant topical event. 'Unreal' reality is supplanted by a subjective, first-person narration that acquires a patina of objectivity through citations, that 'without changing anything' of what can be historically certified, 'changes everything'. Such documentation serves to give a fictional tale necessary verisimilitude, making acceptable the writer's interpretations and conjectures. Uncritical readers, willing participants in an 'emulative syndrome', identify with the writer and conform their 'reality of reference' with that of the narrating voice (Bernardinelli and Ceserani 2005, 115, 128), reifying Sciascia's version of events. Thus, Sciascia's mixture of history and speculation collides with, and overwhelm, the 'reality principle': the connection between proofs, truth and history, 'what truly happened' ('*ciò che propriamente è stato*', Ginzburg 2006, 210).

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Notes

1. See Gutor's succinct discussion of the 'philological pseudo-rigour' of *L'affaire*, for Gutor 'a work of undoubtable literary value' in which 'esthetic and literary exigencies predominate'. (2008, 192–95).
2. I read Farrell's monograph while polishing this essay and was pleased to find many points of convergence with my own views. Indeed, I strongly agree with his assertion: 'In *L'affaire Moro*, Moro is a character in a work of literature, and the personality and value system of that character owe as much to the creed of the author as of the subject himself' (1995, 120). But I will argue that it is necessary to go beyond that claim and consider Sciascia's Moro more an emanation of Sciascia's belief system than a faithful reflection of the historical figure.
3. See Sciascia 2004, I, 685. Citations from the three-volume collection of Sciascia's *Opere* (2004) will be made throughout by reference to the volume number (which will be indicated by a Roman numeral) and the page number.
4. See Sciascia 2004, I, 963–64. As Rosengarten has convincingly argued, Sciascia's atemporal, or '"ontological" interpretation of Sicilian life' inadequately attempts to explain Sicilian society in 'essentialist terms' (1998, 127). Peter and Jane Schneider also contend that 'Sciascia's analyses betray... an essentialist understanding of culture as pervading all classes and groups, permitting of no alternative formulation' (1998, 257).
5. *A futura memoria (se la memoria ha un futuro)* is one of Sciascia's last books. It is a collection of journalistic pieces (from the last decade of his life) on justice, the mafia and emblematic crimes and trials. It can be found in volume III of his collected *Opere* (763–900).
6. For Pischedda '[t]he image of the Christian Democrat President that has been delivered to history and to common sense' is the one created by Sciascia: a 'prisoner condemned to death by a twofold power: a terrorist one and a "statolatric" one, but who nevertheless manages, with perseverance, to contend till the end' (2008).
7. The 'historical compromise' between the country's largest popular forces, the Communists and the Christian Democrats, was oriented toward the realisation of a coherent programme of progressive reforms. Barbagallo (2009, 117).
8. This discussion has been collected in its entirety in the volume *Coraggio e viltà* (Porzio 1977).
9. While I have no evidence that Sciascia read John Barth, Hayden White, or other theoreticians of postmodernism, Sciascia does seem to participate, as I state near the outset, in the literary *Zeitgeist* of the 1970s. The reader will remember that White argued that 'the difference between a historical and a fictional account of the world is formal, not substantive' (1973, 290).
10. For Eco, the act of creating a possible world, one not necessarily connected to reality, inheres in the process of literary narration. Eco proposes that literary worlds are grounded in 'a fictional agreement' between writer and reader – readers pretend that what is narrated has really taken place and authors pretend their imaginary stories are true – that allows readers to escape into a world ordered by the narrator above the chaos of reality. And as long as the characters and events recounted in the fiction parallel those of the 'real' world, the audience may believe the story is true. If the ordered, fictitious story is true, then our chaotic world makes sense. Eco (1994, 107, 91).
11. Pasolini's 'Il romanzo delle stragi' utilises the refrain 'Io so' ('I know') to list what the *poeta civile* knows but cannot prove (1999, 362–67).
12. On 21 March the new majority responded to the extraordinary circumstance by approving a number of anti-terrorism measures that deemed mere suspicion sufficient motive for the police to hold and interrogate suspected terrorists and tap their telephones. Cherchi and Garelli (2003, 10).
13. For Sciascia's distrust of science, see Francese (2010).
14. This theory – that Moro was discredited preemptively, so as to preclude any possibility that the political strategy he pursued, the *compromesso storico*, from being realised – is supported by Giovanni Galloni, a close collaborator of Moro for 30 years (2008, 249) and by Steve Pieczenik,

a professional psychiatrist and US Department of State anti-terrorism expert who advised Cossiga while Moro was held prisoner. See Amara (2006, 157–87).

15. This latter trait caused the writer to assert, with tongue at least partially in cheek, his desire to have inscribed on his tomb 'he [c]ontradicted and contradicted himself'. Sciascia (1982, 177).
16. '*Degnità*' reflects the more open 'i' of Sicilian pronunciation, and is distinct from standard Italian's *dignità*. For an explication of the concept of 'degnità' in Sciascia, see Francese (2008, 114–15).
17. Sciascia 1982, 144. Farrell indicates how 'Sciascia underlines that Moro too was a southern Italian, so that if birth in the same village had forged a link between writer and subject in the case of Fra Diego, the common inheritance of Mediterranean culture established a fellowship, if at a greater remove, between Sciascia and Moro' (1995, 122).
18. See Sciascia 2004, II, 496. For Moro's ordeal, see Chapter 6 of Klopp (1999), 'The death of a president: The effacement of an author'.
19. In 'L'articolo delle lucciole' Pasolini referenced a devaluation of 'formal democracy' (1999, 162) and 'a power vacuum' (ibid., 166) that was being filled by 'a crisis and a reorganisation which cannot but shock the entire nation. Indicative of this is the morbid waiting around for a *coup d'état*' (ibid., 167). The 'Articolo delle lucciole' (first published 1 February 1975 with the title 'Il vuoto del potere') falls, chronologically, between two other, equally well-known articles. In the first, another *scritto corsaro* entitled 'Cos'è questo golpe? Io so' (14 November 1974; now Pasolini 1999, 111–17), Pasolini denounced 'a series of "golpes"' perpetrated to protect those in power, including the *stragi* of Milan in 1969, and of Brescia and Bologna in 1974 (Pasolini 1999, 111; emphasis added). In a third article (a 'lettera luterana' entitled 'Bisognerebbe processare i gerarchi DC', first published 28 August 1975, now Pasolini 1999, 632–38), Pasolini argued that those who held the reigns of Italian government in hand should be 'accused of an endless number of crimes', including 'connivance with the mafia, high treason in favour of a foreign nation, collaboration with the CIA, unlawful use of agencies such as the SID (Italy's intelligence agency from 1965 to 1977), responsibility in the *stragi* of Milan, Brescia and Bologna'. Pasolini (1999, 637–38).
20. Numerous Sciascian protagonists use irony to subvert and/or negotiate their place in the male hierarchy. Sciascia casts into relief 'the irony which politician Moro hid, of which he only rarely gave a glimpse' in a letter by Moro appended to 'Comunicato numero 5' (2004, II, 514) and in a letter to the President of the Republic (ibid., 548). Prior to Moro's capture, during television appearances, '[o]nly occasionally, between the eyes and lips, could one catch a glimpse of irony and disdain' (ibid., 484; see also 495).
21. Sciascia 2004, II, 472. It seems almost superfluous to point out that Moro was denied counsel, contact with his family, and a trial whose outcome was not a foregone conclusion.
22. Pellegrino was chair, from late 1994 to 1996 and from 27 September 1996 to 29 May 2001 of the Parliamentary Commission on Terrorism.
23. Even though the conclusion of the 'trial' was not announced until 15 April, shortly after the release of the letter to Cossiga, according to Flamigni 'Aldo Moro very quickly realised that his life was hanging by a thread. From early April onwards he starts writing wills and, as he discovers that the Red Brigades have not had them posted to his family, he rewrites them'. Quoted in Amara (2006, 147).
24. For testimony in this regard of two of Moro's jailors, see Amara (2006, 126–32).
25. According to Pellegrino, 'reading Moro's memoir it seems evident that he has told things, and has talked, even if only vaguely, about the strategy of tension, about *stragismo* and even about Gladio'. Fasanella, Pellegrino and Sestieri (2008, 185).
26. The scholarly literature on this topic would suggest that the feeling was not mutual. According to Johnson, the impotence of the condemned causes them to see guards as both 'agents of custody, who seek to maintain life, and agents of execution, who oversee and inflict death'. Because prisoners 'are intensely sensitive to the duality of the death row guard's role... a deep and perhaps unbridgeable chasm separates them from staff' (1979, 163).
27. It should be noted that for Pieczenik 'stabilising' Italy meant blocking the 'destabilising' tendency of the *compromesso storico* (which would have brought the PCI into the government, which in turn would have threatened NATO) and restoring to the DC firm control of Italy's governing alliance. Amara (2006, 104).

28. As Antonello Trombadori pointed out to Sciascia, no negative moral judgement of Moro's prison behaviour was expressed in public by any of Italy's leaders, with the possible exception of some eminent representatives of the Vatican who contended that the sanctity of a human life must be set aside when situations arise that involve the destinies of other individuals. Sciascia (1982, 87–88).

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