

<CN>Chapter 15

<CT>Italian Resistance Writing in the Years of the ‘Second Republic’

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<A>Introduction

During the early 1990s, Italy went through a period of intense political turmoil (Ginsborg 1996, 2003). The parties which had organised the Resistance movement from 1943 to 1945 and emerged victorious from the Second World War to dominate Italian politics ever since disappeared from the map, or reconfigured themselves to such an extent that they appeared to lose all connection with their past. This reconfiguration was particularly the case with the PCI (Partito Comunista Italiano, the Italian Communist Party), which became the PDS (Partito Democratico della Sinistra, the Democratic Party of the Left) in 1991, under the leadership of Achille Occhetto. In a moment of enormous symbolic significance, Occhetto announced his intentions for change to an audience of veteran Bolognese partisans in November 1989, shortly after the collapse of the Berlin Wall (Kertzer 1996: 1–3; Cooke 2011: 146–47). At the same time, new political parties emerged and with them new political figures, most conspicuously Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia! and the federalist Northern Leagues led by Umberto Bossi. Berlusconi and Bossi found an ally in Gianfranco Fini, leader of the far Right Alleanza Nazionale, who declared in 1995 that his party was ‘post-Fascist’. In a famous speech made in 1996, Luciano Violante, the speaker of the Chamber of Deputies (and former leading figure of the Italian Communist Party), argued that it was time to re-consider the motives of the *ragazzi di Salò*, those Italians who had remained loyal to Mussolini and the RSI (Repubblica Sociale Italiana; also called Repubblica di Salò) during the period 1943–1945 (Cooke 2011: 174–75). By

examining the ‘lacerations of the past’, Violante implied, it might be possible to heal the scars which had divided the nation for so long, and so take Italy forward and out of its crisis. There was a general sense that Italy’s past and, above all, the past of the Resistance period were on their way out, necessary victims of the purging process that would lead the nation from the First to the Second Republic. History had ended; an illusion had passed.

Given this ‘revisionist’ context, which can only be sketched out briefly here, one might have expected a terminal decline, from the 1990s to the present, in what is broadly termed Italian Resistance culture. It is certainly true that the Italian State and the major political parties no longer identify themselves with the Resistance and with anti-Fascism to the extent that they did up to the 1980s. And it is also the case that the Resistance movement has taken what can only be termed a sound beating in some quarters, notably in the shape of the highly successful ‘anti-Resistance’ novels written by Giampaolo Pansa, the journalist and one-time author of highly praised and patiently researched historical works on the Resistance (Cooke 2011: 166–70, 177–81). Yet, perhaps paradoxically, the period from the 1990s onwards has also seen the publication of many interesting works of literature (and historiography) on this topic, to the extent that it is almost possible to speak of a revival of the Resistance trope which, however, is no longer a form of ‘civic religion’, to use a term suggestively employed by Stephen Gundle in a landmark article (2000). It is possible to determine a new cultural phase, characterised in some cases by significant innovation. This new phase, in which the ideological and cultural paradigms of the past are less fixed, is the subject of this chapter.

<A>The Resistance Turns Yellow

The detective story, known as the *giallo* (yellow) in Italian because the genre was once published in books with yellow covers, did not exploit the resources offered by the Resistance period until

relatively recently. This may be because the crimes of the Mafia were more suited to the genre, or the Fascist period offered a wider range of narrative possibilities. On the other hand, it was perhaps the case that the Resistance, because of its sacrosanct status, was off limits to the writers of detective stories. This situation changed in the early 1990s, as already stated above, creating a cultural space for *gialli* with a Resistance setting. An additional factor in the ‘yellowing’ of Resistance narratives was the fortuitous emergence of murky, blood-drenched stories from the end of the war and the period immediately following it. These stories rose to the surface in the late summer of 1990 when the subject of the post-war killings of Fascists by partisans hit the newspapers in spectacular fashion. The killings were not by any means a ‘new’ story, but were used as a means of casting doubt on the democratic credentials of the Left at the very time that the PCI was searching for a new identity. By suggesting that the history of the PCI was tainted by a bloodbath, those sections of the press who were hostile to the idea of a post-Communist party were able to question the future Democratic Party’s legitimacy. In an increasingly frenzied climate, Italian readers learnt of shallow graves, of the executions of entire families (Fascist or not), of partisans fitted up for crimes committed by others, of buses carrying Fascist prisoners vanishing into thin air, of raids on prisons holding Fascists, and of a generalised climate of rough and summary justice. The word *desaperecido* [lit. ‘disappeared’], which had entered the Italian lexicon from its Argentinian origins, acquired new and sinister resonances.

The polemic over the so-called ‘triangle of death’ in the Communist heartlands of Bologna, Modena and Reggio Emilia (Bertani 2002; Cooke 2011: 151–54) thus provided plenty of material for the writers of detective stories. The first to emerge from the bloodbath was Carlo Lucarelli, at the time an emerging writer, who has gone on to become a significant figure in Italian culture – in addition to his many books, he has hosted a highly successful television series

which looks into the many mysteries of Italian history, such as the Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan in December 1969.

Carlo Lucarelli's *L'estate torbida* (1991, translated as *The Damned Season*) is the second of a trilogy of detective stories, featuring police *commissario* De Luca. Before the narrative begins, there are two sections of what literary critics define as paratext – quotations from *L'Unità*, the Italian Communist Party newspaper, and a preface by Lucarelli. The two quotations are from 2 November 1945 and 31 May 1945, respectively. In the first extract, the unnamed journalist reflects that 'less than a year has passed since we were risking our lives every day' in the Resistance and that 'at that time, when Communists were shooting and dying for everyone, nobody told them they mustn't "overdo it"'. The second (from a few days after the Liberation of Italy in April 1945) invites comrades 'to lay down our arms[:] ... we went to war and we won, now our job is not to lose the peace'. The quotations explicitly refer to the climate of violence at the end of war and to the need to put an end to the killing, but the first also suggests that this was not going to be a simple process. Readers of the book who are familiar with post-war Italian history will immediately recognise how the quotations reflect the tormented debate about the twin souls of the PCI – on the one hand, a democratic party guided by its leader, Palmiro Togliatti, and, on the other, a revolutionary party led (so it has been claimed) by Pietro Secchia. The double life (or *doppiezza*) of the PCI has always been an issue which has interested historians of Italian Communism, even more so when the party ceased to exist in 1991, provoking a new era of (largely hostile) historiography (Fantoni 2014). On the face of it, Lucarelli seems to be making a 'conscious attempt to present himself as both detective and historian' (Pieri 2007: 195), establishing where he and his book lie – firmly grounded in history, informed by a knowledge of the intricacies of the post-war situation, backed up by profound

research in a newspaper library in Bologna (where Lucarelli lives), or even perhaps the Gramsci Institute, which has a complete run of *L'Unità*. However, a quick search of the online archive of *L'Unità* reveals that, on 31 May 1945, no such text appeared in the paper and that, on 2 November 1945, the paper was not published. Lucarelli has quite simply and quite legitimately (he is, after all, a writer of fiction and not an academic historian) made it up. The false 'quotations' from contemporary sources underline a rather basic point about the relationship between literature and history – it is not specular, but a relationship of some sort exists nonetheless. Lucarelli creatively and playfully exploits possible intersections between the two and the potentialities created by liminal zones where the distinction between literature and history are blurred (the Italian title of the book, the 'turbid summer', emphasises this dimension of uncertainty).

The reader learns more about the slippery characteristics of the book in Lucarelli's short preface, which begins with the claim that he was 'supposed to graduate from Bologna University with a thesis in contemporary history on the police during the fascist period' (13). While researching for this work, entitled 'The Vision of the Police in the Memories of Anti-fascists', he came across an individual who had worked in the Italian police force from 1941 to 1981. Initially, he had worked for the Fascist secret police before working for the partisan police at the end of the war. He then went on to work for the police, where his job required him to 'spy on, and to arrest some of those partisans who had been his colleagues and who were now considered dangerous subversives' (14). Such a career path might seem unlikely, but recent pioneering academic research carried out by Jonathan Dunnage (2013) illustrates how such a parabola was perfectly plausible. Lucarelli continues by stating that this 'encounter, and the studies I was undertaking at that moment, opened my eyes to a period that is fundamental in the history of

Italy: strange, complicated and contradictory' (14). Lucarelli subsequently provides his readers with a succinct account of the Second World War, explaining how Italy was split in two, following the armistice declaration of 8 September 1943, creating 'enormous moral and political confusion' (14). His policeman friend explained, however, that he was a 'technician, a professional, not a politician'. It was this statement which encouraged him to write *Carte Blanche* (the first book of the trilogy), to invent Commissario De Luca and lose himself 'in his adventures'. The preface ends with the statement 'And I never did write my thesis' (15). All of this looks on the face of it to be perfectly plausible, and that is really what is important about this preface. Sceptics might question whether Lucarelli really did give up his history thesis to become a writer of detective stories. I have yet to find anyone amongst my colleagues at Bologna University who recalls Lucarelli pursuing such a line of study, and, sadly, the one individual who might have supervised such a piece of research is long dead. But this kind of academic detective work completely misses the point. What the preface demonstrates – as do the opening quotations – is the complex interplay of history and literature, together with the potential it offers to the writer of detective stories.

The narrative proper of *The Damned Season* begins with the figure of De Luca standing in the middle of a path, contemplating a landmine and an ants' nest which has formed beside it. As a former Fascist police officer, he is on the run, fearing for his life. The frantic movements of the ants and the unexploded device clearly hint at the violence of the recently ended war, but there is a further level of meaning generated in this opening. Italo Calvino's Resistance novel, first published in 1947, is entitled *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* [The Path to the Nest of Spiders]. The book is part of the Resistance fiction canon, and the image of the individual on a path staring at a nest of insects in Lucarelli's book suggests that the first novel of one of Italy's greatest

writers of fiction is being referenced. This intertextual reference can be interpreted in a variety of different ways. On the one hand, it could be seen as an act of homage to a past master. Equally, there might be a suggestion that what Lucarelli is doing is rather different from Calvino's 'neorealist' text. Certainly, the violence in Calvino's novel is hinted at, rather than described in the detail which we encounter in *The Damned Season*. More likely, though, the reference to the Calvino novel is an indication that Lucarelli is conscious that he is working in the context of a very long tradition of Resistance fiction, beginning with Elio Vittorini's *Uomini e no* (1945), moving to Calvino and Cesare Pavese (1949), and thereafter to the likes of Renata Viganò (1954) and Beppe Fenoglio (1952, 1959, 1963, 1968, 1994), to name but a few (see Cooke 1997). As will be described below, one of the characteristics of Resistance writing after 1990, which is not limited to Lucarelli by any means, is a tendency to deliberately invoke the canon of Resistance fiction. Much of this recent Resistance writing is, therefore, as much about the history of Italian fiction as it is about the Resistance itself. In a way, the 'new' writers are placing themselves in a long line, seeking out and acknowledging the influence of their own Resistance fiction-writing ancestors.

De Luca is interrupted by Brigadier Leonardi, an individual who, it transpires, is a member of the partisan police force. Despite De Luca's claim that he is a Bolognese called Morandi, Leonardi soon recognises him as the brilliant detective he met in Milan in 1943 and recruits him, in the hope that he can help him solve a recent multiple murder case. The classic combination of the experienced detective and the naïve but keen dilettante is thus rapidly established. The book is indeed full of commonplaces taken from the detective-story repertoire – the protagonist is a washed-up, bedraggled investigator who has trouble sleeping and has problems related to alcohol. There is also plenty of lurid sex, the digging up of bodies

accompanied by retching, and so on. The case the two detectives attempt to solve is loosely based around a real event which occurred near Lugo (Ravenna) when an entire noble family, the Manzoni Counts, were executed along with their dog. Historians interpret these killings either as an example of the execution of Fascist sympathisers, or as a case of peasant *jacquerie* (Sauro Onofri 2007: 107). In Lucarelli's tale, a count disappears at roughly the same time as an entire peasant family (plus dog – the biggest clue that the Manzoni killings are the inspiration for the story) are beaten to death. One of the victims, Delmo Guerra, was also tortured. As the plot unravels, the motives for the killings are shown to have little to do with politics, but more with mistaken identity and, above all, greed. At the end of the story, De Luca tells his sidekick: 'This is not a moral battle between the good guys and the bad guys For us, homicide is simply a physical fact, a question of legal responsibility' (116). In this way, Lucarelli returns to the point that he has made in the preface – he is interested in telling stories which show a detective solving murder cases. Politics do not come into it.

Lucarelli's trilogy fully revealed the possibilities that the Resistance offered to writers of *gialli* in the 1990s. Other fictional works from the period which either exhibit the characteristics of the *giallo*, or else clearly belong to the genre, include Giampaolo Pansa's *Ma l'amore no* (1994), Edoardo Angelino's *L'inverno dei mongoli* (1995) and Alessandro Gennari's *Le ragioni del sangue* (1995). In *Le ragioni del sangue*, the detective/protagonist is the son of a partisan whose death at the beginning of the narrative leads to a twin search: on one level, the forty-year-old Giuseppe Marga seeks to understand his deceased father's character so he can understand himself; on the other, he seeks to understand his father's wartime activities so he can gain an understanding of the times in which he lived. The 'reasons for blood' are thus personal (the blood running from father to son) and historical (the blood shed during and after the war). The

key which unlocks the mystery is a diary penned by Marga's father, Antonio, in 1949, which he left with the great love of his life for safe keeping. Giuseppe tracks down the custodian, the refined and elegant Anna Manzi, who willingly hands it to him. The narrative then shifts from the first person of the son to the third person of the father. The 'notebook', which occupies the greater part of the book, reveals much information about the father's character, loves and fondness for alcohol, and so provides Giuseppe with the necessary information to unlock his own complex psychology. But it also reveals much more, particularly about Antonio's activities as a soldier in Albania and then Greece, followed by deportation to a German prison camp and, finally, Dachau. The narrative strategy of the war diary thus allows Gennari to confront, possibly for the first time in a work of fiction, the subject of the harsh reality of the Italian military internees.

By dint of good fortune, Giuseppe eventually returns to his native Emilia in early 1945 and joins a partisan formation, led by his boyhood friend, Giorgio Morandi. Morandi is an efficient leader, but he is adamant that he will not put his weapons down when the war is over. Morandi and others thus espouse the much-discussed revolutionary line which had received so much attention during the 'triangle of death' affair. After the war, Morandi and his partisans keep to their word, carry out numerous executions, look to Secchia as their leader and, when the circle begins to close around them, ingeniously frame two democratic partisans, one of whom is made to 'disappear' in a shallow grave, while the other is forced to flee to Yugoslavia where he spends many years in a labour camp for the enemies of Tito. But Morandi and his partisans are by no means the only individuals responsible for problematic actions. A depraved bunch who describe themselves as partisans, but who are in reality common delinquents, turn to robbery and sexual torture after the war. Their activities are promptly halted by Morandi's band. But the

nastiest moment in a book which is suffused with violence occurs when an RSI official is captured and turned over to the father of the partisan he has tortured by pulling out his teeth and cutting off his cheeks. The father, until then a mild man, exacts his revenge by having the soldier tied to the ground and fed to the pigs. The violence does eventually stop in post-war Italy, but Antonio lives forever in fear that it will resurface again at some point, which it does after his death: the partisan who was framed returns from years of exile in Argentina and murders Morandi with the help of an ice pick concealed in a newspaper. This grisly ending was based on a real event – the revenge killing of an RSI soldier by a partisan who had had his house burnt down. Gennari thus fully exploited the situation in which he found himself as a writer in the mid-1990s: the ‘triangle of death’ at the end of the long civil war made his *giallo* eminently believable to a reading public who had a familiarity with the story and an interest in ‘true crime’.

More recently there has been another wave of detective-style works such as Valerio Varesi’s *Il fiume delle nebbie* [River of Shadows] (2003) and *Le ombre di Montelupo* [The Dark Valley] (2005), as well as Aldo Cazzullo’s *La mia anima è ovunque tu sia* (2011). The Resistance detective story is now, it could be argued, a fully fledged member of the genre.

<A>Into the Black

While the predominant colour for Resistance fiction in the 1990s was the yellow of the *giallo*, there were also a number of cases of fiction which investigated the ‘dark side’ – the Fascism of Mussolini’s Italian Social Republic. In most cases, these authors were either former members of the RSI or at the very least Fascist sympathisers. Ugo Franzolin was a Fascist journalist and war correspondent, who was arrested on 25 April 1945 – the day he would continually claim that he died (in reality he died in September 2012). After the war, he wrote for the neo-Fascist newspaper *Il secolo d’Italia* and first attracted attention with a novel on El Alamein (*I giorni di*

El Alamein, 1967), which received a favourable review by the influential journalist Indro Montanelli. In the mid-1980s, he published a novel on his experiences with the RSI, *Il repubblicano* (1985, reprinted 1995) and in the 1990s he published a collection of short stories, *Nostra gente* (1992), which deal with the difficulties experienced by former members of the RSI in the immediate post-war era. The stories, which are little more than brief fragments, have little literary merit but the fact that they were published is significant. There is a sense that the lives of former adherents of the RSI were beginning to acquire literary and, more importantly, political dignity, a point Franzolin makes in his epigraph: 'Each story is self-contained. But they are linked by a climate of expectation and of hope'. Franzolin also contributed to a collection of short stories, *Storie d'amore e di guerra* (1998), featuring his own work, as well as that of three others – Enrico Accolla, Aldo Giorleo and Franco Grazioli – who had all been involved in the RSI (Accolla as a journalist, Giorleo as a sailor and Grazioli as a member of a parachute regiment). Further evidence of a change of climate would be provided by the republication, in 1995, of Carlo Mazzantini's novel *A cercar la bella morte* (the first version came out in 1986) and Massimo Cirioni's *Berto & Lucio* (1997), a novel whose convoluted (and distastefully racist) plot focuses on the question of reconciliation between the partisans and the *ragazzi di Salò*.

<A>Towards the New Resistance Novel

As has been discussed above, there was plenty of creative activity inspired by the Resistance during the last decade of the twentieth century. There followed a period of apparent silence which was broken by the film *L'uomo che verrà* (2009). Directed by Giorgio Diritti, the film depicts a peasant family caught up in the massacre at Monte Sole near Bologna in the summer of 1944. With in excess of seven hundred victims, this appalling crime was 'the most important and consistent massacre of civilians in the Western theatre of operations during the Second World

War' (Baldissara and Pezzino 2009: 11). The film is more of a threnody for the passing of Italian peasant culture than a depiction of the massacre itself. It is permeated by nostalgia, with many scenes shot through a blue filter. The story itself is seen through the eyes of, and frequently narrated by, the young protagonist, Martina, who survives the slaughter and protects her baby brother. Despite the appalling violence, perpetrated by men, there is at least some hope that the 'man who will come' in the shape of the baby brother will offer some redemption. For most of the film, the language employed is the *romagnolo* dialect, rendered comprehensible by subtitles in Italian. On the surface, the film is a return to the past in a number of ways. It looks back to the past and to a certain type of filmmaking – one thinks, for example, of the use of dialect in neo-realist cinema (although this was never as extensive as some believe) and of the specific case of Ermanno Olmi's *L'albero degli zoccoli* (1978). But, at the same time, it is a modern film, exploring issues of gender and particularly gendered violence. The film is, therefore, a mixture of tradition and innovation – a characteristic, as will be shown below, of a number of fictional texts published over the last few years.

Paola Soriga's *Dove finisce Roma* (2012) was a debut novel published in the Einaudi 'stile libero' (free style) series, which houses experimental fiction written, in the main, by young authors. Soriga was born in Sardinia but moved to Rome as a young girl, a pattern of emigration which is replicated in the book in the story of the young protagonist Ida, who has followed her sister Agnese to the capital, arriving there in 1938 at twelve years of age. The book begins in May 1944, shortly before the liberation of Rome. In a cave, on the outskirts of Rome, Ida, now an eighteen-year-old who has been a courier or *staffetta* for the partisans, is in hiding from the enemy. The author uses a form of free indirect style, where irregular sentence structure is employed to convey the idea of the protagonist's febrile thought-patterns:

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No-one has arrived for two days. For two days only the sound of mice and her breathing, which at times is deeper out of fear and clenched waiting teeth, and dripping water, somewhere. The lamp casts little light but it is better, however to keep looking around, the weak light and the shadows, she's afraid. (Soriga 2012: 5)

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Ida remains in hiding, prey to terrors of all kinds, until a few days before the Allies arrive, and in a series of flashbacks, the omniscient third-person narrator recreates the story of her life from her childhood in Sardinia to her time as a *staffetta*. The characters she meets and befriends – and one with whom she falls in love – are drawn with remarkable subtlety and narrative sophistication. While the Resistance remains in the background, the book concentrates on the inner life and development of Ida from a twelve-year-old newly arrived in Rome to a woman on the cusp of adulthood. Two characters dominate her thoughts: her Jewish friend, Micol, whom she sees taken away and who never returns, and Antonio who, she desperately hopes, reciprocates her love. Ida is eventually persuaded that it is safe to leave her cave, but is unable to share the joys of the Romans in their liberated city – Micol, she knows, is dead, and Antonio announces his intention to marry another woman. The last sentences of the novel convey a sense of overwhelming pessimism and a hint that Ida has developed a death wish:

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At a crossroads, she does not know which way to turn. She's learnt them, the streets of Rome, in these years, in a way that she still finds difficult to believe, but always, every now and again, she surprises herself by getting lost, and not

knowing where she is. She thinks this way is the way back. Maybe even this way, maybe that just means a slightly longer route. She thinks lose yourself. She thinks that maybe there are still some Germans around. She continues walking and the sun beats down heavily on her head. (140)

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The final scene recalls and revisits the famous ending of Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (1945) which shows the boys who bring comfort to Don Pietro at his moment of execution walking towards the city and the dome of San Pietro, in a sequence suffused with hope for the future. At the end of *Dove finisce Roma*, there is no such hope for a better Italy, nor indeed of a better life for Ida. *Roma città aperta* came out shortly after the war was over; *Dove finisce Roma* at a time of deep economic and political despair.

While the Resistance itself remains in the background of *Dove finisce Roma*, Resistance culture is very much at the forefront of the novel in the shape of multiple references to the works of Soriga's antecedents. The ambivalent ending not only evokes *Roma città aperta*, but also recalls Fenoglio's *Il partigiano Johnny* (1968), while Ida's fruitless search for love is reminiscent of the same author's *Una questione privata* (1963). Numerous characters' names are taken from Resistance films or novels: Ida's name is probably a reference to the *partigiana* Ada Gobetti, while her sister is called Agnese (from Renata Viganò's *L'Agnese va a morire*, 1949); her Jewish friend shares the name of the beautiful but doomed character at the centre of Giorgio Bassani's *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini* (1962), who is also the object of the unrequited love of the novel's narrator; her friend Rita has a brother, Fausto, and a sister, Anna, references to Carlo Cassola's novel *Fausto ed Anna* (1952), as well as a mother called Renata; from *Roma città aperta* come the name of the priest Don Pietro, as well as the characters of Manfredi and Francesco (who dies

during the Allied bombing raids on San Lorenzo). Ida also meets, and is profoundly affected by, a character called Giaime who, as we learn later, is blown up while crossing enemy lines, meeting the same end as the person who undoubtedly inspired Soriga here, Giaime Pintor, author of one of the sacred texts of the Resistance, the last letter to his brother, which first circulated clandestinely before it was published in 1946. The ‘last letter’ would then be read out, particularly at schools, on the anniversary of the Liberation. In this way, *Dove finisce Roma* is a kind of act of love towards the texts of the past, bringing them to the attention of different generations of readers.

The most recent, and possibly the most innovative Resistance novel to be published since Beppe Fenoglio’s *Il partigiano Johnny* is the work written by Scrittura industriale collettiva (The Collective for Industrial Writing, SIC) and entitled *In territorio nemico*, published in April 2013 to widespread critical and public acclaim. The circumstances of its composition are, to say the least, different, and have their origins in a ‘method’ of collective writing first presented at the Turin International Book Fair in 2007. In a brochure distributed at the fair, Gregorio Magini and Vanni Santoni, the two inventors of the method, explained that they wanted to give a ‘future to collective literature’ which, with a few important exceptions, was considered merely a literary ‘game’. The exceptions they referred to certainly included the Wu Ming collective, who had produced collaborative novels such as *Asce di Guerra* (Wu Ming and Ravagli 2000) and *54* (Wu Ming 2002), both of which dealt obliquely with the Resistance. Rather than a ‘literary game’, what was needed was a method which would place literary creation on the same plane as cinema, theatre and the video game. The method would be industrial (the SIC logo is a factory) and work in such a way as to eliminate the individual, making the participation of many a ‘virtue and not a vice’. The SIC method, according to the 2007 brochure, has two fundamental characteristics –

the work is organised around a series of ‘cards’ that contain information about narrative elements (such as characters, locations, situations) which the various participants fill in. All writers participate in the completion of these cards and then an ‘artistic director’ chooses and recomposes the work carried out. The SIC website (<http://www.scritturacollettiva.org/>) contains detailed information about the method, with examples taken from several published works. The artistic director’s role is similar to that of a film director who decides on the subject of the project, selects and assembles the ‘raw material’ produced by the authors and has control over the structure of the text, co-ordinating the work and setting deadlines. In its initial phase, the method produced a short novel and a series of short stories, such as *Il principe*, a tormented love-triangle which begins in an Esselunga supermarket in Padua and can be downloaded for free from the SIC website. The story involved the co-operation of two artistic directors (Magini and Santoni) and four writers. By early 2009, however, the inventors of the SIC method were looking at a much more ambitious project. In a blog posted at 2:53 on the morning of 30 January 2009, they offered some preliminary considerations on a ‘Great Open SIC novel’ which would involve at least ‘one hundred hands’ (i.e., fifty authors), but they hoped to involve many more. The novel would be set in Italy in the period 1943–1945, but the ‘soggetto’ (which I will translate with the technical term ‘treatment’, used by documentary-makers to describe a highly detailed outline) had not as yet been defined; however, it would deal with the German Occupation. In a new development, Magini and Santoni invited potential collaborators to collect stories and testimonies and send them in (they explained that they were currently working on an ‘advanced’ SIC method). These stories would form the basis of the treatment and, once this had been established, different groups would work on the different sections of the text. In other words, according to this advanced method, the ‘one hundred hands’ would not all work on the same

sections, for obvious reasons of organisation and control of material. The aim, they stated, was to create a ‘hybrid novel – an undefined narrative object – which lies somewhere in between the historical novel, historiography and a work of fiction’. They would produce, they hoped, ‘a thoroughly researched novel capable of saying something important, but which is also a joy to read’.

It was not long before potential collaborators registered their interest, with comments ranging from ‘you can count on me’ to much longer reactions. Federico Flamminio, who would go on to provide testimonies for the treatment and participate in the writing process, explained that his grandfathers had fought in Africa and Sicily, and that he could see the Gustav defensive line (built by the Germans to the south of Rome) from his window. Email and the SIC method meant that the project was not restricted to people who lived in Italy. Marco Codebò, an academic exile working at Long Island University and also an accomplished creative writer, wrote in to say that ‘the project interested him a lot’. The blog also indicated a timetable – the stories and testimonies would be sent in during the period from late February to early April. Using these, the treatment would then be put together, in order to give a clear idea of the different sections of the novel, the characters and its overall geography and chronology. Work on the actual writing of the text was scheduled to begin on 25 April (the official date of the Liberation of Italy and a national holiday). Things did not quite turn out as planned, with the treatment going through four iterations before it was finalised at the end of September.

Version 4 of the treatment provides a fascinating and detailed insight into where the book stood, several years before it was published. The plan was to write a historical novel, with ‘fictional but verisimilar characters’. Historical truth would be respected ‘almost always’ when it came to facts and ‘always’ when it came to matters of ‘spirit’. Great care had been taken in

making sure the chronology and the topography of the story were accurate. To achieve their aim, Magini and Santoni proposed to have three main narrative threads involving characters whose stories were linked, but who would only come together at the end of the book. Of these, one would be dynamic, involving an individual (Matteo Curti) who travels most of the length of the peninsular in a dramatic journey which brings him into contact with various individuals and organisations, a second (the story of Adele Curti, Matteo's sister) would be restricted to the city of Milan, and a third would be a static element dealing with the inner life of an isolated individual (Aldo Giavazzi, Adele's husband). There followed a synopsis and detailed descriptions of the narrative 'blocks' of each of the three characters: eight blocks for Matteo, six for Adele, and four for Aldo. Details were also given of the psychological development of the characters. A section on the structure of the narrative indicated how all the different sequences would relate to each other (A = Matteo, B = Adele, C = Aldo, and so A1 indicates Matteo's first block, C2 Aldo's second block, and so on):

<PRY/>

A B C A B A C A B A C A B A B C A B

A1 B1 C1 A2 B2 A3 C2 A4 B3 A5 C3 A6 B4 A7 B5 C4 A8 B6

</PRY>

It is a testimony to the organisational powers of Magini and Santoni that there are only minor differences between the plan of 2009 and the published version. For example, the treatment indicates a brief period in which Matteo develops an interest in a group of freemasons. In the published version, this is merely hinted at, and the flirtation with the Brotherhood seems rather a reference to Pierre Bezukhov's interest in freemasonry in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869) than a fully developed section of narrative.

In its final version, *In territorio nemico* is a novel which fully matches the ambitions of its multiple creators. The three stories interlink effectively, with Matteo's narrative providing a compelling insight into the vicissitudes of a young man who is caught up in the uncertainties following the armistice declaration of 8 September. As he makes his way northwards, he witnesses the German massacre at Caiazzo (told in graphic detail) and passes through a series of partisan groups. Initially with sympathies for the Action Party (a Left-leaning organisation led by the future prime minister Ferruccio Parri), he subsequently joins an anarchist organisation operating near Carrara, only to be separated from the organisation, following a German combing-out operation. Again the most effective pages are those which describe acts of violence. While Matteo operates as a partisan in the Italian countryside, his sister moves from being irredeemably *bourgeoise* to a highly effective urban partisan. Her husband, in contrast and perhaps like many Italians at the time, tries to cut himself off from history in an isolated farmhouse, only to end up prey to physical and mental entropy. As with the texts discussed earlier, there are many links between *In territorio nemico* and the Resistance canon. Adele's story offers a modern, gendered rereading of Vittorini's *Uomini e no* (1945), while Matteo's moves through different partisan organisations, recalling the wanderings of Johnny in Fenoglio's *Il partigiano Johnny* (Cooke 2000). Aldo's story has many parallels with that of Corrado in Pavese's *La casa in collina* (1949). Curiously enough, the one absence would seem to be Italo Calvino, but in a way he is there. In 1949, Calvino wrote an article in which he surveyed the last four years of 'Italian Literature on the Resistance'. Despite the many publications, what was still lacking, he claimed, was a work which was both 'epic' and 'choral' at the same time. In the exceptional sweep of *In territorio nemico*, a novel involving the collaboration of more than one hundred individuals, Calvino has finally got more than he could ever have hoped for.

The impact of works like *In territorio nemico* and *Dove finisce Roma* suggest that, despite the desacralisation of the Resistance and the inevitable passing of those individuals who participated in the movement, it is still alive and kicking and part of Italian cultural identity. The colours of the Resistance may have changed in this process – yellow is a new addition – but it is still there.

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<A>Filmography

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